

The Predicament: How Now Shall We Live?

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Faithfulness of God

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This morning, I want to encourage you to open your Bibles to the book of 1 Samuel in the Old Testament and today we're going to begin in chapter 10 of 1 Samuel and we're going to end in chapter 12, and I know that's a whole lot of biblical material for a very short amount of time, however, we're going to be very specific and very strategic in the verses that we look at in chapters 10 through 12 of 1 Samuel. If you're here as a guest or a visitor, I want to welcome you to a journey through a very specific book of the Bible, what we know as 1 Samuel. It's really a place in the Bible that's most known for the story in chapter 17 of David and Goliath, but really the story of 1 Samuel is the story of God's faithfulness.

Now we know that God is seen as faithful from Genesis to Revelation but what's happening in 1 Samuel is that you see the community, you see the culture, you see the people migrating from being a people that are sacred to secular; you see them that are in accordance to the will, the way, and the word of God forsaking that and saying, "No, we would rather have a king. We would rather look like the world. We'd rather sound like the world." What you basically see is how do we as believers, how do we trust God to be faithful in a world of compromise. If you missed last week, it was that time where kind of that threshold, that tipping point where the Israelites said, "Give us a king. We want to look like everybody else." Today in chapter 10 of 1 Samuel, we discover that the king is going to be anointed. His name is Saul. After him will come David and Solomon and then the kingdom will divide. And don't get me wrong, if you read through these passages, there are times that God moves mightily through Saul and that's a part of the equation, but today we're going to see what does it look like to navigate, what does it look like to walk through times of pure secularism. In fact, today we're going to discuss the predicament that not only the Israelites were in but the predicament that we are in today. How do we as a believer in Jesus Christ walk through life and navigate a life that is almost totally secular in nature. Really the question we want to ask ourselves is how now shall we live? Now again, that's not original to me. In fact, if you'll go back and do the research, in the mid-70s there was a Christian thinker by the name of Francis Schaeffer who coined the phrase "how now shall we live" as we came out of the '60s, as we came out of this mentality of let's do what we want, express ourselves in any capacity that we desire. If we asked the question 50 years ago, "how now shall we live," how even more important we ask that question today.

So beginning in 1 Samuel 10, now we're not going to read a whole lot of quantity but some very specific quality. I want to begin by looking at the reality that the Israelites faced in 1 Samuel 10, the reality that we live today, the predicament, if you'll allow me to say, that we find ourselves in. Notice in verse 1, it says,

1 Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the LORD hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?

This is the anointing of Saul as the first monarch, the first king of Israel, and everything sounds good until you get to verse 19. Listen to Samuel's response to the people.

19 And ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations; and ye have said unto him, Nay, but set a king over us. Now therefore present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes, and by your thousands.

The reality is the king is now in charge. The reality is they have forsaken the judges, they have forsaken doing it God's way, they have decided to do it man's way, and basically in verse 19 whom we know as Samuel says, "You must face the reality of your decision."

So what's the reality of the life of how now shall we live today? I want to address our culture as a believer in Jesus Christ from a quantitative perspective and then really from a quality perspective. Let's talk quantity for just a moment. If we were to go back in the immediate post World War II era, go back about 70 years ago, and we asked people that live in our culture how often do you go to church, how often do you go to a Bible study, how often do you read your Bible, all those "spiritual questions," it would not surprise you to find a more fervency then than today. That would not be shocking by any stretch of the imagination but allow me to give you one statistic that I find fascinating. Back in those days we asked the average person who went to church, now by the way, per this illustration, that's you, okay? How often do you go? It's a good question to ask, right? Do you know what the answer was on average? Three times a week. Sunday school counts as one, worship service counts as two, choir practice, Bible study, youth group, whatever it may be, that in any given week a faithful person in their faith would dawn the doors of an assembly of faith usually on average about three times a week.

Now some of you grew up in homes where you had a drug problem, you were drug to church and it was eight times a week, but the average is three. Same survey today: it's three times a month. That means the average person who says they're a believer, who says that they attend a church of some kind faithfully will attend a service, a Bible study, a whatever it may be three times a month. So the reality check is those who claim the name of Jesus, we're not near as fervent and as faithful as we might think we are, and if you dig down a little bit deeper, it's not just the quantity of "attendance," it's the quality of what we actually believe.

There is a great misnomer behind the word Christian. Someone says, "Well, I'm a Christian. I'm this." You do realize some people think being a Christian means you live in the South. To other people they think, "Well, being a Christian means I don't do this, I don't do that." Allow me to give you the biblical definition, okay? Not the cultural definition, not a denominational definition but a biblical definition in the most simplistic sense is somebody who recognizes that they have a sin problem, they have violated the precepts and the commandments of God, that Jesus Christ alone can satisfy that sin problem, that his life, his death and his resurrection is the only thing that is satisfactory for the forgiveness of one's sins and the salvation of one's soul. Now I know to a lot of you, you say, "Well, this is elementary and I've got that," but I'm not going to expand it but can I explore that a little bit more? Today, again we do these surveys all the time what do people actually believe because there's a whole lot of people that think just because they don't do this or do that, they think they're a Christian.

So let's go through a few concepts here. Let's just use these as the basics of the faith. Somebody who believes that the Bible is true. Not only do they believe the Bible is true, they believe that Jesus Christ was born of a virgin, he lived a sinless life, he died a sacrificial death, he physically rose from the grave victorious and one day he's coming back. Can we all agree that's probably second grade Sunday school on our campus today? When we do that survey, do you know what we discover? That less than 10% of Americans concur with and agree with all those precepts. What does that mean? I'm going to take the high road, that means that for every one of you who do, that means there's nine that don't; that for every one of us who say, "I believe in the Jesus of the Bible," there are nine in our culture or 10 depending on how you look at the survey, that do not.

Why is that important? Because we need to welcome the reality that we're living in 1 Samuel 10. The day of the judges has passed and the day of the kings have arrived. We have said as a culture, "God, we don't want you a part of our lives. We don't want you a part personally, professionally. We want to look just like everyone else."

So the next question we have to ask ourselves is who are these kings, who are these "rulers." I want you to notice beginning in verse 22 that Saul, the first king, is described and how he's described in these verses is a fascinating study of the predicament that you and I are in today. It says in verse 22,

22 Therefore they enquired of the LORD further, if the man should yet come thither. And the LORD answered, Behold, he hath hid himself among the stuff. 23 And they ran and fetched him thence: and when he stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward. 24 And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the LORD hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said, God save the king.

It's interesting that the people made the decision, "We don't want to do it God's way, give us a king." So what did God do? God gave them a king with two very interesting

qualities. Quality 1: he wanted nothing to do with the Lord. Where is Saul? He's hid among the stuff. God anointed him, God chose him, God said, "You're to be their leader." He wanted nothing to do with what God had for his life. And secondly, he was head and shoulders above everybody else. He was a man that had a physical appearance, he had a presentation about himself that was pleasing to the eyes and to the flesh.

Why is this important? Because I'm of the belief here in 1 Samuel 10 and even in the world that you and I are walking in today, that when you and I have the opportunity to make the decision that we no longer want to do it God's way, I believe there's biblical evidence that God gives us a mirror reflection of who we are in those that he allows to be over us. What does that mean? That means if you don't like who's in charge, it's our fault. That means if you don't like the way things are going, it's our fault because what happened in 1 Samuel 10? Were the people, the Israelites, were the Jewish people, were they seeking the things of God or were they running away? They were running away, were they not? And all they wanted to do was have somebody else fight their battles. All they wanted was somebody else, not God. "We want to look like everybody else. We want to be stronger like everybody else. We want to be the king of the proverbial hill of all the other nations."

I believe there is strong biblical evidence that when you and I have a decision to make and, by the way, you may not realize this, most of the problems that you and I at least in this context face are what we call first world problems, and what I mean by that is we gripe about a lot of things that other people would consider a luxury in life. But think about how many times you and I have the opportunity to do something just like the Israelites did, we have the opportunity to make a decision who we think should best lead us. Now we do that on a macro scale quite regularly, in our context we call them elections. We do this on a micro level in our own communities and even within our own churches. I think it's interesting that why the Lord gave Saul to the people. He gave Saul to the people because Saul was a man after their heart. Do you know what happens when we get to David? David's a man after God's heart. He was showing them exactly who they were in relationship to him.

Why is this important? Because I need you today in the reality of our life, I need you to do a very important spiritual gut-check, okay, because we live in a world where we have 24 hour news where all we're consumed with is we don't like your guy, we want our guy. Can I be honest with you? Both of their names are Saul. Why? Because we're running from God and all we really want is somebody to provide and fight our battles. Isn't it interesting that we argue, we scream, we solicit, we spend billions of dollars in our context to essentially just trade one Saul for another. That's what we do, when what we need to understand and this passage is going to show it throughout the day, is that God allows leadership in our lives as a barometer to show us what we really look like in light of him. We discover that we are a people who for decades have been running from the things of God and at the end of the day we don't want the Lord honored, we just want our battles fought, we want our bellies fed, we want our wars won, and we want our physical lives provided for.

You see, what we discover is that the Israelites and you and I are really in the same predicament so the big question is this: how do we respond? How as a believer in Jesus Christ live in a world where we're quantifiably considerably outnumbered, quality-wise very few who even call the name of Christianity their identifier, very few even know what that is much less actually believe it, in a world where we are governed by, we are led by, we have those in front of us who picture our carnality and our rebellion, how do we respond? And I think this is an important aspect of the message because when we get to verse 25, there is this interesting nugget of truth that's mentioned that may be at times a hard pill for us to swallow. It says,

25 Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before the LORD. And Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house. 26 And Saul also went home to Gibeah; and there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched. [Listen to verse 27,] 27 But the children of Belial [or the children of the devil] said, How shall this man save us? And they despised him, and brought him no presents. But he held his peace.

So let me ask you the rhetorical question: who set Saul in place? God did. Who was it that abjectly rebelled against him? The children of the devil. You see, what they did not like is they had gotten exactly what they deserved. And the response that you and I need to learn and it's a hard pill to swallow, is that when we don't like those that are in leadership, when we don't like the way things are going, is that there are times, and we're going to discuss this in a moment, where our response would be what we would want it to be but more likely than not it is not.

Allow me to explore that. When it comes to those who are carnal, fleshly, those that are contrary to the things of God, the Saul's of our life, how do we respond? Well, first and foremost, we have to realize that every single one of those individuals whether we like them or not God has them there for a reason, okay? Now one of those reasons usually is to show us how far we have gone sideways from the things of God, but they're there for a reason, alright? Now that being said, do you know what it says in 1 Timothy 2? It says that you and I are to pray for the kings, we are to pray for those that are in leadership over us, listen to this, so that we might live a quiet and peaceable life. It doesn't say we pray for them so that we can be in charge, it says we pray that they will leave us alone to worship our God the way that we know we need to. That's what we pray for.

Now there's this passage in Romans 13... strategic places and here's one of the problems, if I've heard it once, I've heard it a thousand times, we as believers, we love to play the God card because you know we would rather obey God... whatever I want to do... for faith. I don't like the way things... You see, the book of Proverbs is chock full of... know that you've got... treat each other wrongly just... the only two times we get to play the God card... though we may not like... my flesh...

Now go to verse 24 and 25, the end of the conversation. Here's what Samuel says to them. They've confessed their sin... both you and your king. Now why is that last word so

important? Because God did not say, "If you'll just come confess that you messed up, I'll give you a new ruler." He didn't say, "I'll give you a different system." The word "king" is used. You say, "Why is that important?" Here is the resolve that you and I need to embrace in the world that we're navigating today: we need to be more interested in the forgiveness of God than the restoration of our world.

Now let me kind of peel the layers away of what that means. To restore something, many of you have restored a home, you've restored a car, you've restored a piece of equipment, whatever it may be, to restore something is to take something that is in ill condition and to return it into a state that existed prior to it being rusted, broken down, broken, whatever it may be. I cannot tell you how many conversations I've had, if we were to take a survey there's a whole lot of people listening to my voice that when it comes to our world compared to 1 Samuel, we love some restoration. We would love to have a day where the precepts and the commandments of God are at the center of our world. We would love to have a day where those who are in leadership or in positions of authority not only fear the name of God but believe in Jesus Christ, we would love to go back to the Great Awakenings and the revivals in those days and say, "Oh, only to have those days." Here's the problem: we have made restoration a synonym with forgiveness and they're two different things. 1 John 1:9 says if we confess our sin he is faithful and just to forgive us. It does not say restore and one of the things that we need to be resolved in is this: just because we get on our face, just because we confess, just because we say, "God, it's our fault," doesn't mean you get who you want in charge. In fact, you can go back to the Old Testament and do you know what you'll discover? The Israelites rebelled against God for hundreds of years. Remember what he told them? "If you don't change your ways, you're going into captivity." As soon as they hit Babylon do you know what they said? "Bad idea, God. Shouldn't have done it. We're ready to go back home." Do you know what he told them? "Okay, 70 years. In 70 years you can go back home." You get to the end of the Old Testament, again the Israelites are rebelling against God. They finally cry out to God, "O God, we made a mistake." He said, "Do you know what? I'm not going to speak to you again for 430 years."

Do you want to get real specific? One of my favorite stories in the Bible, the story of Hosea and Gomer. Gomer, the wife, is a picture of the people of God who've rebelled against God. Hosea is a picture of the Lord loving us out of our captivity, loving us out of our rebellion. Whom we know as Gomer gets to such a place in her life that she's an indentured servant, she is being mistreated every conceivable way. The only way that she got out of her situation is when the picture of the Lord came and "pulled her out." She did not immediately get out of it. In fact, if you look at the chronology it was probably months or even possibly years.

You say, "Why is this important?" Because I'm going to ask an important question as I close today. I've asked this before and I'm going to go ahead and show you, nobody likes the question but I'm going to ask it anyway. As a believer in Jesus Christ, are you more interested in revival or being in charge because that will answer the resolve question. If all you want is new leadership, if all you want is a new system, then all you really want is restoration. If you desire God to move in and among you and our culture, then we need to

fall on our face, we need to seek repentance and allow him to work out the consequences as he sees fit. It may be a couple of years like Gomer. It may be 70 years like Israel. It may be... We don't get the privilege of making the rules of restoration but we should be resolved to say, "We have sinned." Can we today as believers in Jesus Christ quit pointing our fingers at whoever is on the television and say, "It's our fault. We strayed from the word of God. We have strayed from the things of God." And until we get right nothing out there is ever going to be right. Can we resolve today that we would rather have the forgiveness of our sin than just a better environment to walk through life.

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. Maybe today here in person, maybe online, maybe even listening on the radio, maybe you're that individual who even though today was kind of more of a bigger picture, maybe today it was really more about you as an individual where you say, "Do you know what? I've done so much in my life to fix my life. I've tried to restore my life. I've tried to alter things." But maybe today even as an individual you said, "Do you know what? But at the end of the day the problem is I've got a sin problem and I need Jesus to forgive me and none of that other stuff is going to matter until he does." The Bible says whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Maybe today is the day where you call on the name of the Lord. It doesn't mean that you say a certain set of words in a right order. It doesn't mean you take a course or pass a test. It just means you cry out to God that you have a sin condition that only he can solve.

Today if you're that individual, not necessarily out loud, not necessarily the words I would use, would you cry out to the Lord? Maybe your heart's cry would go something like this. "God, you know my heart better than even myself. I know I have sinned. God, I've been places I should have never been. God, I've done deeds I should have never be a part of. I've spoken words that should have never left my mouth. And God, you and you alone know the thoughts between my ears that should have never taken place. God, your Bible says the wages or the result of my sin is death and, God, I'm here to confess I deserve every ounce of it. God, but your word also says but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. So God, today I'm staking my life today and forever not on my deeds but on Christ Jesus alone. God, today I believe, I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he came on my behalf, he lived a sinless life on my behalf. God, I believe he died a sacrificial death bearing the pain and the punishment of my sin on his cross. And God, today I believe that when Jesus Christ rose from the grave three days later, he made it possible that my sin could be forgiven and my soul to be saved. God, today I don't have all the answers to all the 'stuff' out there but I know that Jesus Christ is the answer to the sin in here. So the best way I know how, I'm asking you to forgive me. I'm asking you to save me. I just want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed and our eyes still closed, maybe you're that person today for the very first time cried out to the Lord. In a moment, I'm going to pray for us and we're going to stand and sing together and want to invite you just to step out and step forward. We would love to hear your story and to pray with you, to pray for you. Maybe today you say, "Well, pastor, I've already done that." Maybe you've never followed in believer's baptism, maybe the Lord has said this is your family of faith, this is the church you're to

be a part of, or maybe you're just walking through something that you're just out of gas and you need somebody to pray with you, you need somebody to pray for you. This time of response is for whatever and however the Lord is leading in your life.

Heavenly Father, as we come to this time of response, God, you have spoken, the question is how will we respond? God, I know there are those here that when we stand in a moment need to step out and step forward. God, I also know there are those here, it's not about stepping out and stepping forward it's about stepping out of this place in a few moments with the resolve to be more interested in being right with you than just having a world that is conducive to their fleshly desires. God, help us today to respond to you and you alone. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.