

“Following Christ Illustrated”
1 Samuel 12:14, 24
(Preached at Trinity, January 22, 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 Samuel gives his farewell address he charges the people to examine his record. He tells them, **Verses 12:2-3** - "I have walked before you from my youth even to this day. ³ "Here I am; bear witness against me before the LORD"
2. Samuel also reminds them of God’s faithfulness:
Verse 7 "So now, take your stand, that I may plead with you before the LORD concerning all the righteous acts of the LORD which He did for you and your fathers."
3. In contrast, however, Israel had not been faithful. Samuel rehearses their history of unfaithfulness. He rehearses the period of the judges when Israel continually rebelled against God – **Verse 9** - "But they forgot the LORD their God"
4. To add to their condemnation, Israel has now rejected God and has insisted on a king. Their demand has been met -
Verse 1 - "Behold, I have listened to your voice in all that you said to me and I have appointed a king over you."
Verse 13 - "Now therefore, here is the king whom you have chosen, whom you have asked for, and behold, the LORD has set a king over you."
5. Samuel now charges them and their king to wholly follow God – **Verses 14-15**. If they follow God with their whole heart God’s blessings will be upon them. If they turn from Him, however, God’s hand will be against them.
6. It was an ultimatum. They had foolishly asked for a king like the nations. But they would not be able to divest themselves of their responsibility towards God. God still demanded that they follow Him exclusively. In the previous chapter they were called upon to “renew the kingdom.” - **1 Samuel 11:14 NAU** - "Come and let us go to Gilgal and renew the kingdom there."
They were being called upon to declare their allegiance to God alone.
William Blaikie – “They were to remember that their having a king in no sense and in no degree exempted them from their moral and spiritual obligations to God. It did not give them on atom more liberty either in the matter of worship, or in those weightier matters of the law—justice, mercy, and truth. It did not make it one iota less sinful to erect altars to Baal or Ashtaroth, or join with any of their neighbours in religious festivals in honour of these gods.” ¹
7. God’s demand upon His people hasn’t changed. We are still commanded to follow Him with our whole heart. What has changed in the New Covenant is the transforming work of regeneration and the indwelling Spirit enabling us to will and to do of His good pleasure.

¹ Blaikie, William. *Expository Lectures on the Book of First Samuel*. Birmingham: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2005, Page 197.

8. Jesus charges us in the Gospel:
Matthew 16:24 NAU - "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me."
9. But what does it look like to follow Christ? It is important since Jesus describes it as the essence of our salvation.
 The characteristics of following God have never changed. The wonderful thing about **Verse 14** of this passage is Samuel sets up a conditional statement that defines for us what it means to follow God.
 "If you will fear the LORD and serve Him, and listen to His voice and not rebel against the command of the LORD, then both you and also the king who reigns over you will follow the LORD your God."
10. This evening I want us to look carefully at these three elements that define what it means to follow God. Following Christ is following God.
- I. First of all, following Christ demands that we fear Him - "If you will fear the LORD"
- A. The fear of God speaks of holy reverence.
1. It demands looking upon Him with a proper respect of His Divine perfections. God is Holy, Holy, Holy
 2. God dwells in infinite splendor and majesty. He dwells in light inaccessible to mere creatures. John declares:
John 1:18 NAU - "No one has seen God at any time"
 3. God is wholly other. He is immense, grand, infinite.
 4. Such fear demands that we approach God's worship with the highest of reverence. It demands understanding Him as He is
 LBC 2:1 – ". . . who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, who is immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, every way infinite, most holy, most wise, most free, most absolute . . ."
- B. The fear of God also speaks of the terror of approaching Him.
1. It is a terrible thing to have an unholy familiarity with God. It is a terrible thing to fail to fully apprehend the weightiness of God.
 2. The writer of Hebrews describes God as a consuming fire
Hebrews 12:28-29 NAU - "Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; ²⁹ for our God is a consuming fire."
 3. When Samuel called upon God to send thunder and rain it was truly terrifying. It was during the harvest, the dry period. Israel knew this was the hand of God.
1 Samuel 12:18 NAU - "So Samuel called to the LORD, and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day; and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel."
- C. We hear the fear of God in the context of the Gospel
1. Sinai was a terrifying sight of thunder and lightning and earthquakes
 2. The Gospel offers the sweet peace of reconciliation.
 3. But the danger is to approach the throne of God in the comfort of the Gospel but failing to recognize God's infinite holiness.

- D. Over and over in Scripture God encourages us, “Do not be afraid.”
1. Even here we hear it from the lips of Samuel
1 Samuel 12:20 NAU - "Samuel said to the people, "Do not fear. You have committed all this evil, yet do not turn aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart."
 2. God is our comfort, our mighty Rock. Even more important, He is our covenant God. Samuel reminds Israel of this blessing
1 Samuel 12:22 NAU - "For the LORD will not abandon His people on account of His great name, because the LORD has been pleased to make you a people for Himself."
 3. God tells us do not be afraid because He holds all power. He governs all things. He provides for His people.
 4. But God is infinitely glorious. We must bow before His infinite splendor. In this sense He must be feared.
- D. To follow God is to recognize His infinite majesty
1. God is totally *other*. In other words, His is infinitely distinct, apart.
 2. To approach such a God is to approach in total humility, absolute submission, holy worship
 3. To know Him properly is to fear Him.
Psalms 111:10 NAU - "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do *His commandments*; His praise endures forever."
Proverbs 1:7 NAU - "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction."
 4. To have this fear of God is to have that divine wisdom imparted to us enabling us to think of God rightly
- II. To follow Christ demands recognizing His dominion – it demands bowing in service to Him. "If you will fear the LORD and serve Him"
- A. The servant lives in submission to his master
1. Israel was called in covenant with God. They were called to worship God and serve Him alone.
 2. When Pharaoh held Israel in captivity as his servants God sent Moses with this charge: "Thus says the LORD, Let My people go, that they may serve Me" (**Exodus. 8:1**).
 3. God’s charge was, "You shall not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who surround you"
Deuteronomy 8:19 NAU - "It shall come about if you ever forget the LORD your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I testify against you today that you will surely perish."
 4. Israel’s history was a history of giving their hearts to other gods
1 Samuel 12:9 NAU - "But they forgot the LORD their God"
- B. The Christian is call to serve Christ
1. One of the earliest creeds is, “Jesus is Lord.”
 2. We serve Christ out of a passion for Him, out of pure delight, out of a heart of gratitude and a desire to please Him. Grace has given us a freedom to serve.

3. The servant of Christ obeys Him out of a sincere desire to be useful to Him. We love Him. We want to honor Him.
 4. This is what it means to follow Him.
- C. How do we serve Christ?
1. By looking upon the lost with compassion. Jesus said all men are our neighbor.
 - a. We serve Christ by blessing our neighbor with good works. This was the example of Christ.
Acts 10:38 NAU - "*You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good*"
 - b. Our highest service towards the lost is bringing them the Gospel. Paul saw the Gospel as a debt to be paid.
Romans 1:14-15 NAU - " I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. ¹⁵ So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome."
KJV - "I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians"
 2. We serve Christ by serving our brothers and sisters in Christ
Galatians 6:10 NAU - "So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith."
 - a. We are to love Christ by loving one another. Jesus asked this important question of Peter.
John 21:16 NAU - "Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Shepherd My sheep."
 - b. We are to watch over, encourage, teach, buildup one another
Ephesians 4:15-16 NAU - "but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love."
 3. We serve Christ by serving His church. We are to serve each other individually, but we must also serve the church corporately.
 - a. This means we must labor to build and strengthen the church
 Our Covenant: "to strive for the advancement of this church, in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, disciplines and doctrines; to attend its services; to contribute cheerfully through the tithe. . ."
 - b. As the church grew and developed it built buildings. Our relocation has provided you opportunities for service. There are endless opportunities to clean, paint, yardwork. Do you see this as serving Christ? Do you rejoice in these opportunities to serve Christ?

- III. To follow Christ demands a heart to obey Him
 "and listen to His voice and not rebel against the command of the LORD"
- A. Israel's problem was a failure to reverence the Word of God
1. Following God has always demanded obeying His Word
Isaiah 66:2 NAU - "But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word."
 2. This was also Saul's problem
1 Samuel 15:23 NAU - "Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from *being* king."
- B. To honor and serve Christ is to obey Him
1. The Christian delights in holiness. He has a holy disposition. There is a difference in obeying Christ and delighting in obedience
 2. In the New Covenant God has written his Law upon the heart of His people.
Jeremiah 31:33 NAU - "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."
 3. John describes it:
1 John 5:3 NAU - "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome."
 4. Jesus declared obedience is at the heart of loving Him.
John 14:15 NAU - "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments."
John 14:24 - "He who does not love Me does not keep My words"

Conclusion:

1. Sadly, following God was not Israel's heart. Instead of following God as their King they wanted a king like the nations.
1 Samuel 12:12 NAU - "When you saw that Nahash the king of the sons of Ammon came against you, you said to me, 'No, but a king shall reign over us,' although the LORD your God was your king."
2. And we will learn following God is not in the heart of their first king.
1 Samuel 13:13 - "Samuel said to Saul, "You have acted foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you"
3. The Christian, on the other hand, has been transformed. Our hearts have been drawn to follow Christ in love. We continually consider His goodness and it draws our hearts to love, serve, and obey Him.
4. This was Samuel's words to Israel:
1 Samuel 12:24 NAU - "Only fear the LORD and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you."
5. It is God's goodness that draws us to honor Him.
 Paul writes in Romans:
Romans 2:4 NAU - "Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?"
6. Following Jesus demands that we worship Him in reverence, serve Him with delight, and obey Him from a motivation of love.