

For His Name's Sake

Book of 1 Samuel

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Let's take our Bibles and look together in 1 Samuel 12 as we work our way through this Old Testament book. We're going to consider how it is and why it is that God is merciful to sinners. It's a good topic. The title gives away the answer it's "For His Great Name's Sake." This world still hasn't figure it out yet, that everything that's going on is for His great name's sake. We're just tenants in this world. When the LORD sends a whirlwind that takes out a population, everybody is like, "Wow! Why did that happen?" For His great name's sake. One way or another, the LORD is going to remind us that this is His world and we're here until He evicts us or He takes us out of here.

None of us is getting out of here alive so the question is: how do we live our lives and what is it that God is doing in this world? Well, I'll tell you this: when it says "for His great name's sake," what is that name above all names that God has honored? That's His Son. Just like when He created the universe, He purposed that everything turn around the sun. It took some generations to figure it out for a while. For a long time people thought that everything was turning around the earth. That's what man thinks, it's turning around me, but it's not. It's turning around the Son. It is for His great name's sake.

So even in this, you say, "What about Israel's rebellion?" It's still for His great name's sake. Their rebellion, their asking for a king, in no way thwarted in one nano-iota, if that's a word, deviated in any way from what God had purposed. And here in 1 Samuel 12:16, remember now, Samuel had just anointed Saul and he had just warned them that what the LORD was doing was because they had forsaken the LORD. But, he says as we saw last time in verse 13, "Now therefore behold the king," it's not the king whom God has chosen. There is one King that God has set upon His Holy Hill. It's always been that way. It's been Christ.

But notice, "whom ye have chosen." People today try to preach up free-will like it's some kind of good thing. It's not. When God leaves men to their own desires and will, they'll always chose against Him. That's just our depravity, our nature. You take a tennis ball and turn it loose, where does it go? Automatically falls. The only reason it's up is because there's a hand holding it.

So Samuel here is reminding them, "Here's your king." Notice in verse 13, "and whom ye have desired! and, behold, the LORD hath set a king over you." Some listening to that thought, "Woo! We've finally got a king like all the other nations! Now we're going to be at peace!"

But in reality, notice in verse 15, "if ye will not obey the voice of the LORD," and that really is the word "since." "Since you will not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall the hand of the LORD be against you, as it was against your fathers." That's quite a sobering statement but it's a blessing to read, "If God be for us, who shall be against us?" That's a blessing. But to read this, "then shall the hand of the LORD be against you, as it was against your fathers," what we can say is, "If God be against you, there is no hope." If He gives you up to your own reprobate mind, there's no hope. That's not a good thing.

Here in verse 16, "Now therefore stand and see this great thing, which the LORD will do before your eyes." People like excitement. They're already excited about the king, they're not hearing what Samuel has to say. It's kind of like kids on the last day or last week of school, the teacher is still trying to teach and they're all thinking, "You know, come on! Let's get on outta here!" They're not interested in learning. That's the way these were: heart hardened, all that Samuel was saying unto them just like water off a duck's back.

So Samuel says, "You want to see a demonstration of the power of God?" He says, "Is it not wheat harvest to day?" Now, you have to understand when it's harvest time, it's not supposed to be raining. The rains have already come, the seed has already been watered and now the harvest is growing. You don't want water during harvest season. It would be like the flooding we've experienced here. If there are soy beans in the field, it's going to be destroyed. You don't want rain. It's got to be dry so you can go in and get it out.

So he says, "Is it not wheat harvest to day? I will call unto the LORD," and here he's doing it under the LORD's direction, he's not just saying this on a whim, the Spirit of the LORD directing him, "and he shall send thunder and rain; that ye may perceive," this is why. You see, everybody today is all excited about miracles. "I want to see a sign." Christ said, "An adulterous generation seeks signs and wonders."

Here he says, "that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which ye have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking you a king." There is no greater condemnation on a people than to profess, even as our nation does, the majority profess to be Christian and yet they know nothing of the King of kings and LORD of Lords, the One that God has set on His Holy Hill. Oh yeah, people have a profession and they run after this and that, all kinds of views of who Christ is, and yet there is only one view that matters, it's not your view or mine, it's God's. It's what God has to say about His Son.

What happened? Here in verse 18, "So Samuel called unto the LORD," and notice capital, L-O-R-D. There is only One. When it comes to the saving of sinners or the damning of sinners, it's in His hand.

"And the LORD sent thunder and rain that day," and look what happened, "and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel." Now, here's the thing you have to consider because there are two kinds of fear: there is a Spirit-wrought fear which God works in the hearts of those He's purposed to save, and that fear does lead to repentance; there is a turning from our idolatry, turning from ourselves to trust in and rest in the true and living God. We have to realize too that there is a fear that is temporal. In other words, people get a little shaken up, but then as time goes by they kind of settle back in to where they were, they get comfortable again and off they go down the same path.

I heard an illustration one time, it's like people out in the street during a rainstorm, they might seek cover underneath an awning or at the entryway of a building that's along the way but what happens after the storm passes? If that's not their home and they didn't go in to dwell in it, what do they do but look at the sky and think, "Okay, I can go on." And they head right on down their way. That's the way a lot of people are. I've used the illustration before of the butcher truck pulling up to the gate and hauling off a few cattle in the back. What do the other cows do? They kind of lift their head and watch what's going on, some might get curious and come over, but the cattle they take are being selected to haul off and slaughter for meat. And those cattle will sit there, stand there, whatever, and watch as they lock the gate, load the truck up and off they go. And what do the cattle do? Go right back to eating. It's like nothing was. There are many illustrations in the Scripture where seeing the hand of the LORD, many trembled and feared and yet that's not what converts the heart.

Here in verse 19 it says, "And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the LORD thy God, that we die not." Over the years that I've been preaching the Gospel, I can't tell you how many people get a little unsettled, it could be one thing or another and they come running to the preacher and they want the preacher to pray for them, they're scared, there's something about it, and yet when that storm passes, off they go.

It says, "for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king." I don't know, as I read this, I mean, that sounds like repentance and yet as you read on in the story of Israel, it was just remorse. That's the difference. There's remorse and then there's repentance. And I know that among these there were certainly those that the LORD gave them that cry. We know that because He promised that there was that seed. Just like Elijah, when he was praying to God against Israel is what the Scriptures say, thinking that there wasn't anybody left but him as God has always had a witness in every generation. And it can be pretty dark, even today. There are a lot of religious profession but where are those that you can fellowship with like we enjoy right here? A lot of professing Christians and yet they're just going on down the way.

Every time there's a little storm, they get religious; all it takes sometimes is a death. I've seen it over and over again in my neighbors in my neighborhood, some of them that have asked me to preach the funerals of their loved ones that have died because I'm their neighbor. And they get all religious. They'll tell me, "You know, this is a wake-up call." And what do they say? "I need to get back to church." Getting back to church isn't coming to Christ. You can walk an aisle and say a prayer like all these preachers telling

people to do. That's not coming to Christ. I love what one preacher friend said one time, he said, "Without bowing your head, without closing your eyes, without moving a muscle, come to Christ." That's something we can't do unless the Spirit grants in this heart a heart of repentance to be drawn to Christ.

But the words sound good, don't they? "We have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king." Again, there are some that are just part of the crowd. It says all of the people said the same. But my confidence and hope, it's just like with Elijah when he was praying against Israel the LORD said, "I've got 7,000 that I have reserved," it's the LORD keeping them, "who have not bowed the knee to Baal." You say, "It's not many." Thankfully there are some that the LORD is pleased to keep and when they are caused to cry, they're looking to the Right Person.

Samuel is the mediator. "Pray for my servants unto the LORD thy God, that we die not," thy servants, "for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king." I truly believe when the LORD does a work of Grace in a heart, there is an acknowledgment, a recognizing that everything I've done to this point has been against God. It's as a rebel. There is a laying down of the arms but you have to understand there are some that profess it with their lips and yet go right on with a heart still in darkness. But those that are the LORD's, that's a true confession.

"Samuel said unto the people," verse 20, "Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness." You notice that Scripture doesn't let sinners off the hook. It's not saying, "Oh, it doesn't matter." He comes right back with it. Look that word "wickedness" up, it's about as wicked as you can imagine.

"Ye have done all this wickedness." People today like to be taught on how much wickedness is out in the world but what about the wickedness of my own heart which causes me to do what I do, even in my thoughts? Now, you don't have to go out and kill somebody, commit adultery or rob a bank and do all these things that people call wickedness. What does the Scripture say? And this is addressed particularly to the LORD's sheep, "All we like sheep have gone astray and we have turned every one to his own way." That's the wickedness. It doesn't even take doing something, it's having a heart that turns its own way. Everybody today is talking about, "Well, when I stand before God, I'll have to answer for what I do or I've said, so I've got to watch what I say, I've got to watch what I do." You know, that trial's already over because when Adam fell, we fell. What about what we think? Think about the wicked thoughts that come out continually. We drink iniquity like water. That's our wickedness.

So Samuel doesn't hide it. He says, "Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the LORD." Where is he pointing sinners? You see, he's just like any one of us. I don't know who's the LORD's and who is not. I hear people sometimes get weepy and crying and they get thinking about this sin and that sin and get feeling guilty about this and that, but that's not repentance.

Samuel here, as you would expect of a prophet, is pointing them to the LORD, "turn not aside from following the LORD." Don't even take my word for it. Don't even find comfort in me saying "fear not." If the LORD is the one drawing your heart, then fear not and what? Continue to follow Him. Don't turn aside.

"But serve the LORD with all your heart." That's only possible where the Grace of God has been given to the heart and to serve Him means to be bowed to Him. It doesn't mean get up and get busy and get going and doing more, being more, and all this stuff that works religion uses. No, this is following the LORD. Sheep look to the shepherd. He causes them to. "My sheep hear my voice and they follow me." They'll not follow the voice of a stranger. If you find somebody that professes to follow the LORD for a while and then, whoop, off they're gone following some other god, then obviously one of two things: either they never were the LORD's or He's not been yet revealed in them; He's not yet drawn them. I know this: if the LORD has paid the sin debt for those sinners, He does indeed draw them, and they do follow Him, and they do serve Him.

But there is the command in verse 21, "turn ye not aside: for then should ye go after vain things." Anything apart from the LORD Jesus Christ is a vain thing. There is a lot of vain preaching going on with this Bible open, preachers trying to get people stirred up to be more active and be better witnesses and to be more and follow these commandments and I find it such a hypocrisy because the very ones preaching that way are the worst offenders.

Here He says, "turn ye not aside: for then should ye go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver; for they are vain." You know, the Scriptures say there in Isaiah that, "all of our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Everybody is talking about their sin, that's obvious, but the Scriptures say, "all of our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." How does that fit? Ecclesiastes 7, it says, "There is not a just man on earth that sinneth not in what he does." Now, a lot of people read that and they think, "Well, every once in a while we fall." It's saying, "There's not a just man on earth that sins not." Find the most moral person you can think of, he's a sinner before a Holy God. Don't go by what's on the outward. Following after a vain thing is man in his best state, Scripture says, is altogether vanity. Vanity, vain, it means it's empty and that's what man's profession is.

Notice here, "which cannot profit nor deliver." How many are there that trust in some way in their works for salvation, even a little way? I know they talk about Grace. They say, "No, it's by Grace but..." I always say that goats butt. Whenever someone says, "But," then they're revealing their nature. They are yet in their ignorance. It's not Christ, but. In fact, I heard a preacher one time say salvation is like a tightrope, you've got your balance beam and when you go out there to start walking on that tightrope, on the one hand you've got Christ's righteousness but on the other you've got to balance it with some of your own obedience and together you're going to make it across this cavern, or whatever it is. That's foolishness. Here Samuel is very clear, isn't he? Anything apart from Grace, "turn ye not aside." If you hope is in anything but that work of righteousness which Christ came and accomplished, then it's a vain thing. You might as well jump off a

building and hope the air stops you because that's what vain means, it's just air, it's empty air.

So he's pointing them to the LORD, which is what every true and faithful prophet does. It doesn't take long to listen to a preacher to figure out whether the LORD sent them or not. They all profess the LORD sent them, they all have things going on they want to convince people. They're like charlatans, they've got a pretty good show. Back in the gypsy days, that's what they would do, they would pull into a village and while people were standing there watching the show mesmerized, they had assistants going around pickpocketing everybody, taking their money. Christ calls them hirelings. Just wait for the shoe to drop. I don't care whether it's a radio program, a tv program, a so-called worship service, but sooner or later that preacher is going to get around to, "By the way, I need and the LORD needs your money." They start preaching up money. That's a vain thing. That's misleading people.

I remember one time a man came and sat here for six months and then he left, but before he left, I guess he moved or something, but before he left he came up and shook my hand and he said, "You know, I've been listening to you for six months and to this day I still don't know how you pay the bills." He said, "I kept waiting for the shoe to drop. You don't take up an offering. You're not pleading, you know, with people to dig deep. And you're not dragging it out them. None of that." He said, "I came from a congregation where they need \$52,000 a week just to maintain their bills. They've got this huge monstrosity of a building and now that's all they can talk about." He said, "I honestly do not know how you're paying the bills." But dear friends, this whole property is paid for and more. I'm thankful that all we have to do is look to the LORD and he's going to take care of his business. He's not a beggar God. We don't have to beg people. That's an idol god there. He's going to do his work in his way.

But Paul, again when it talks here about in verse 21, "which cannot profit nor deliver; for they are vain," Paul said, "If righteousness come by law," Galatians 2:21, "If righteousness come by law," and that word means by any regulation or ordinance or any deed, "then Christ is dead in vain." That's quite a strong statement because he was speaking to people that said, "No, it's okay. Christ has accomplished the work but...", here's the "but" again, "all we're saying is at least you have to be circumcised." Paul said, "If you so much as be circumcised, you've fallen from Grace." That's that turning aside and, "turn ye not aside."

Those that are the LORD's, this is not a problem because we've been made to see just how sinful we are and what is the sinfulness of our sin. The problem is with a rebel heart, that if the heart is not yet turned, it's going to rebel, it's going to kick against the pricks, it's going to find some way around, it's going to find the "but," yet it's to be left in that state is condemnation.

Now, you say, "Where is the hope? How is it, then, that God is merciful and gracious?" It's all right here. Look in verse 22, "For the LORD will not forsake his people." So we come back again, who are His people. That's an important word there. When Christ was

to be born, the angel said to Joseph, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus for he shall save his people from their sin." Not try to save. You see, the Jesus that's being preached today is a Jesus that wants to save, tries to save, but alas can't save unless you let him. What kind of savior is that? Can you imagine someone that is given the task of being a lifeguard for the summer on a beach and every time someone starts drowning, they drown and so the lifeguard has to give a report and in the report he puts down, "I tried to save them but they wouldn't let me." The next one comes along, "I tried to save them, wouldn't let me." How long do you think that person is going to be a lifeguard? I dare say if he lets one go down and die he's out of a job. You cannot fail and call yourself a lifeguard.

But I'll tell you, the world is full today of preachers taking this Bible and preaching a failed Jesus. It's another Jesus. It's not the Christ of Scripture. He said, "Of all that the Father has given me, I'll lose nothing. I'll raise them again the last day." That's Who Christ is. He's the One we look to. Why would you look to any savior that depends on you to hold onto his hand? It's not the way the Scriptures put it. His hand is not short that He cannot save. And I'll tell you, if you're saved and I'm saved, the only reason is because of His hand. It's because of Whose hand it is, Whose work it is.

"For the LORD will not forsake his people," here it is, "for his great name's sake." There is one name, the apostles preached it there in the book of Acts, "There is no other name given among heaven whereby you must be saved." That's God's Record. It's His Son.

And it says, "because it hath pleased the LORD to make you his people." Samuel is not talking to everybody here. When you get over to Romans 9, you see that Paul said, "They're not all Israel that are of Israel." There is that Israel that is according to the promise. That's of whom he speaks here when it says, "it hath pleased the LORD to make you his people."

"Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you." Don't ever take Scripture out of context like so many do there in 1 Peter. They say, "Well, God's not willing that any should perish." That's not what it says. "God is longsuffering," it says, "to us-ward and not willing that any," and it's supplied, "of us should perish." Who is the "us-ward"? Well, read it, Peter says, "the elect according to the foreknowledge of God." He's talking about His people in the world. He's not willing that any of those should perish. If it was true that God wasn't willing that any should perish, then He's failed miserably because there are a bunch of people dying every day that are perishing. What kind of God is that? I'm thankful that's not the God of Scripture.

But he says, "God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you." You see, Samuel here is a type of Christ. He's the mediator. He's the prophet. He's the priest. He's the king. These others all wanted their own king but Samuel stood there as being the LORD's anointed, just like Christ has never been removed from the throne. He still is Who He is and He ever lives to intercede on behalf of those that Father gave Him, those for whom He came and paid the debt.

That's what he says in verse 23, "I will teach you the good and the right way." Not what is the good and the right way but Who is the Good, there is only One Good, that's God, and the Right Way. Christ said, "I am the way, the truth and the life: no man comes unto the Father but by me." So against all of the unbelief, against all the rebellion, here stands Samuel declaring one thing: Christ and Christ alone. That's how you can tell a faithful preacher. He's not preaching programs. He's not preaching budgets. He's not preaching populist, he's not preaching social welfare. He's preaching Christ and I'll tell you, if he's preaching Christ, it's not taking him 45 minutes to get to the point. He's beginning with Christ, he's pointing sinners to Christ just like John the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb. He must increase, I must decrease." But a faithful servant he is.

When God is pleased by his Spirit to reveal Christ in a sinner, they can but speak to His honor and glory. It's like breath is to a baby when it's born, it's got to breathe. Try holding your breath. Where there is life, you can't do it. We used to play that as kids, you know, you'd go through a tunnel, hold your breath and everybody was cheating. You could tell it. It was a long tunnel and you could hear the snorting through the nose after a while. If you're alive, you've got to breathe. Try to stop breathing. You can't. You tell yourself, "I'm not going to breathe."

And that's the way it is with those that are the LORD's like verse 24 says, "Only fear the LORD, and serve him," notice, "in Truth." There are a bunch of people talking about serving the LORD but it's not in truth. They are serving according to the works of their hands.

Here it's, "with all your heart." It's a heart work. Salvation is believing from the heart. That's not anything that man can do. I don't even know my own heart. "The heart is deceitful above all things, who can know it?" So if any do, it's evident that the LORD's done a work of Grace in the heart. It's looking to Christ alone.

"For consider how great things he hath done for you." The LORD has given us eyes to see Christ and consider how great things He hath done. A person talking about what they've done, they're still in blindness.

It says, "if ye shall still do wickedly," in other words, persist. So he's making a distinction just like the Gospel does. It's a double-edged sword. There are those to whom this Word is addressed and the LORD does tenderly use to draw them to Himself, but the same message hardens.

That's verse 25, "if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king." What solemn words that we find here.

So in all this, let me just sum it up. What is the reason that God does not utterly cast off a people? That's an important question. Well, we saw in verse 22 and I'll just give these to you. You can write them down if you wish or think about them. But one is because He's forbearing. The LORD is forbearing to His people. In other words, those among Israel whom He has purposed to save from eternity, His eye is on them. He has given them to

Christ therefore He's forbearing. He was forbearing with this people up until Christ came and paid the debt and now there's no more reason to be forbearing because the sin has been put away. Every one has been justified before a Holy God based upon that work of Christ, for whom Christ died. If you say, "Well, He died for everybody," that means there's no condemnation because that's what Scripture says. "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ." The thing is the Scripture doesn't say that it was for everybody. Just like Samuel here preaching, he makes a distinction. He's talking about some that, "If you continue on, this is your end. You look for another sacrifice, you look for another righteousness, you'll be consumed, you and all those you follow."

So the LORD is forbearing. Number 2, in verse 22, He's faithful. That's the only reason that any of us are saved is because of the faithfulness of the LORD. He's faithful to His own glory, it says, "for his great name's sake." He can't deny Himself. If He has purposed to save, He'll save. If Christ has paid the debt, there's no double jeopardy. He's not going to punish the Substitute and then turn around and punish those for whom He died. That would be an unjust God.

When it says there, "If we confess our sins," in 1 John 1:9, "he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." Who is He faithful and just to? He's faithful and just to His own name and He's faithful and just to His own Son. That's why He saves, because if Christ paid that debt, there's no condemnation.

I remember the LORD as He brought that home to my heart and opened it after I had had years of profession, believing that I thought somehow I knew something of the LORD, and then He stopped me in my tracks, gave me a heart attack, arrested me spiritually. But I remember that thought as the LORD turned my eyes to Christ to realize that the work is already done between the Father and the Son. I'm just a beneficiary. It's like someone showing up one day and you're just dirt poor and don't know how you're going to make it and they show up at your door and knock and say you had a rich family member that died and they've left in their will that you're going to be provided for for the rest of your life. You're like, "Who is that? Didn't know anything about him." Well, you're right, you didn't, but you found out about it and that's the way it is in salvation. We find out about God's Grace. We find out about His purpose and will in saving sinners. We find out about that true work of Christ. Not just a down payment but the whole payment is done. The work is done between the Father and the Son.

So in that we see that He's forbearing, He's faithful, thirdly, He's immutable. It says there in verse 22, it's all in here, "because it hath pleased the LORD to make you his people." Whatever God is pleased to do, He never undoes it. If we're saved, He saved us and His Word is without repentance. He is pleased. It pleased the LORD to make you His people. Those He's pleased to make His people, it's never undone. He's immutable.

Fourthly, I would say that the reason any are saved is because He's true to His appointed Mediator and Samuel says here in verse 23, "Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you." Whose intercession is it? It's Samuel's. He's not saying to them, "You get busy praying. Make sure each one of you go

back to your tent now and make sure you get right with God." He said, "God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you." You know, when I think of that, I think of our LORD's High Priestly prayer. He said, "I pray not for the world but I pray for those that thou hast given me. They are thine. What is thine is mine, mine is thine." Don't ever forget that. If we're kept, it's because there is One interceding on our behalf. That's it. It's not our prayers.

And then the final point I'd bring up here, is that the LORD says because He is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. That's what Hebrews 11:6 says. Now, think about it: He is the Rewarder. He's the One that does the saving, He's the One that does the drawing, and just like here in verse 24, that's why Samuel said, "Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you." When He healed that demoniac and that demoniac wanted to just desperately get back in that ship with Christ and go with Him, He said, "No, stay here and go and tell your kin what great things God hath done for you." That's the only thing we've got is what He's done for us. He is the Rewarder of those that diligently seek Him. You see, I wouldn't seek Him had He not rewarded me, not because of any merit in me, but given me, that's the sense of a reward, given me that faith, given me that repentance. All of that is the fruit of what Christ has accomplished. And when people try to build you up a little bit and tell you, "Ah, you're a good Christian." No, I'm not. You don't even know the half of it. It has nothing to do with me. I'll tell you what, though, I've got a Great Savior. And one of those old preachers that died, when he died that's what he wanted put on his tombstone, he said, "Write on that tombstone, 'I am a great sinner but I have a Great Savior.'" That's how he went to his grave and that's my only hope. That's it.