

In 1796, George Washington published his farewell address to the nation. It announced that he would not seek a third term as President and would retire from civic service. In his letter, he also reminded the nation of what was important and issued several warnings that still ring true over 200 years later. Like most things he did, it also started a tradition of outgoing presidents issuing similar addresses when they retired from office.

Washington may have been the first American to do so, but Samuel was one of the first to give such an address. This morning in 1 Samuel 12 we will look at Samuel's retirement party. He is going to address the nation for the last time as their civic leader. He will continue as a prophet, but will retire from being the leader of the nation. And he will give warnings and reminders that we need to hear as followers of Jesus.

Turn with me to 1 Samuel 12.

### **I. We should be (faithful) to the end (v. 1-5).**

Samuel begins his farewell retirement speech in a unique place.

He begins by talking about his own integrity.

It might seem like he is talking about how awesome he has been.

But he is actually doing something different.

Let's take a look.

Verse 1, **"And Samuel said to all Israel, 'Behold, I have obeyed your voice in all that you have said to me and have made a king over you.'"**

He reminds them that he has done what they asked.

He has given them a king.

He has done exactly what they asked for.

And even though the request was wrong, God was willing to do it.

Verse 2, **"And now, behold, the king walks before you, and I am old and gray; and behold, my sons are with you. I have walked before you from my youth until this day."**

This is him beginning a transition.

He is telling that he will retire.

Now they have a king.

They no longer need him as a judge.  
He will no longer be the primary political leader of their nation.  
And he says that he is old.  
He is tired.  
He is too old to do this job.  
And they have the king that they asked for.  
And under him they have Samuel's sons.  
There are others who can take the mantle.

**"walking before"** has the meaning of performing a function on their behalf.

He has led on their behalf and now should the king.  
He has been serving them as judge and prophet.  
And he has done this job since he was a very young man.  
In fact, he has been serving the people since the day he was weaned.  
His entire known life has been spent serving the people.  
And now this chapter is coming to a close.

Verse 3, **"Here I am; testify against me before the LORD and before his anointed. Whose ox have I taken? Or whose donkey have I taken? Or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed? Or from whose hand have I taken a bribe to blind my eyes with it? Testify against me and I will restore it to you."**

There is a lot going on here.  
I want you to understand that Samuel is not talking about how awesome he is.  
This is a remarkable moment of transparency.  
He is putting himself on trial.  
He is placing himself at the mercy of the entire nation.  
He is asking if there is anyone who has anything to accuse him of.  
If there is anyone who would stand up and accuse him of what is wrong.  
Anyone who wants to bring their case before God and the king.  
The door is open and anyone can speak.

And he names specifically the wrongs he has not committed.  
He has never stolen from anyone.  
He has not taken anyone's ox or donkeys wrongly.  
He has never cheated or defrauded anyone.  
He has never lied about what the Lord says.  
He has never prophesied his own ideas and said they were God's.  
He never wrongly said God told me so.  
In fact, not a single one of his words fell to the ground.  
Every single thing he said on God's behalf was true and came true.  
And there's no one that he has oppressed.  
There is no one that he has abused.  
He has never used his position or his power or his status to a single person in their nation.  
He is not harmed the poor or taken from the rich.  
And he has never been bribed.  
He has not used his position to get rich.  
Even though his predecessors did it and his successor, Will, he himself has never been bribed.  
He has not been bought off or paid.  
There is no rich person who donated to his campaign or gave him a cushy job or offered him anything that he took.  
He has never been blinded to what is right and righteous.  
And he opens this, knowing that there is not a single person in the whole country who can accuse him of wrong.  
He is above reproach

Can you think of any leader who could do this today?  
It feels like almost every person you have heard of.  
Even the large Christian leaders have something in the shadows.  
There is something shady they have done.  
Or there is some association they have with someone else is a troublemaker.  
Or a church that had someone who abused children and it is or isn't clear if the church acted as they should or if they overlooked it.

Who would stand up and open this to anyone?  
Who would be willing to say that there is no one who can accuse me of any of this?  
Samuel does.  
And not just that.  
Samuel says if there is someone, then he will restore it!  
He will make it right.  
He does not say that they are lying or trying to cancel him.  
He says anyone who accuses him will be repaid.  
Because he is a man of integrity.

I think this is what we should aspire to be.  
We should be willing and able to do this.  
To be able to stand up and declare this.  
This is an admirable goal for our lives.  
To follow Jesus in such a way that we could say this at the end of our lives.

Verse 4, **"They said, "You have not defrauded us or oppressed us or taken anything from any man's hand."**

And there was no one who speaks.  
They all cry out with one voice to say no.  
You have never stolen from us. You have never oppressed us. You have never done anything wrong.  
We have nothing to accuse you of.  
They declare him innocent.  
And the fact that they do this as a testament to Samuel's character

Verse 5, **"and he said to them, "the Lord is witness against you, and is anointed as witness this day, that you have not found anything in my hand." And they said, "he is witness."**

This is Samuel notarizing their testimony.  
He calls on God and the king to be witnesses of his character.  
They bear witness that no one can accuse him of sin.

One of the most important things in your life as a Christian is to finish well.  
That when we die, we have been faithful.  
That we finish our race without disqualifying ourselves or losing faith.  
We can fail all the way through our race.  
And many of us will.  
We may even disqualify ourselves at times.  
But the most important thing is that we finish by still following Jesus.  
That at the end we have repented and finished well.  
This is what Samuel has done.  
This is what we are to be doing.

If you are older.  
Or if you are closer to the end of your race.  
If like, Samuel may say, I am old and gray.  
I want you to know that, even if you may have retired, and even if your children and your grandchildren are largely grown.  
I want you to know the most important part of your life is not done yet.  
Because one of the most important things in your life is finishing your race well.  
If you are still breathing, you haven't finished yet.  
Do not lose heart do not get discouraged.  
Continue to run until the end.  
Nobody wins a prize in the Olympics for going faster than everybody else if they stop before they cross the line.  
We have to finish.  
It is not about how we start.  
It is not about how well we run most of the race.  
It is not about whether or not we fall a thousand times while we run.  
Because Jesus will continue to pick us back up as long as we run.  
It is all about how we finish.  
We need to finish well.  
We need to finish faithfully.

**II. We are far too often (unfaithful) (v. 6-18).**

Some of why Samuel wants to remind them of who he is so they can be ready to hear what he has to say.

These are not the words of a bitter old man.

These are not the words of someone who is upset that they've been replaced and pushed out.

These are the words of a holy man who is above reproach, who has never done anything but God wants.

And he needs to remind them that their story is largely one of unfaithfulness.

And he's gonna go through it quickly to show them time after time after time that they were unfaithful to God.

Verse 6, **"and Samuel said to the people, "the Lord is witness, who appointed Moses and Aaron and brought your father up out of the land of Egypt."**

He takes them back to Exodus.

To remind them that he is in the line of those who have been appointed like Moses and Aaron over God's people.

And God is gonna bear witness that what he says is right.

And he starts by recounting the story of how they were delivered out of slavery.

Verse 7, **"now, therefore, stand still that I may plead with you before the Lord, concerning all the righteous deeds of the Lord that he performed for you and for your father's."**

He's going to go through Israel's history.

He's gonna remind them of things they might've forgotten.

Verse 8, **"when Jacob went into Egypt, and the Egyptians oppressed them, your father's cried out to the Lord, and the Lord sent Moses and Aaron, who brought your father's out out of Egypt and made them dwell in this place."**

When they were slave slaves in Egypt, they cried out to God and God delivered.

And God did not deliver by sending the king, but God delivered by sending a Shepherd named Moses.

And got delivered by sending his brother a priest.

And these two men with no army.

With no crowns.

Deliver the people out of one of the greatest empires in the ancient world.

Verse 9, **"but they forgot the Lord their God. And he sold them into the hand of Sisera, commander of the army of Hazor, enter into the hand of the Philistine and into the hand of the king of Moab and they fought against them."**

Let's focus on that first part of they forgot God.

Even after they saw the plagues in the miracles in the Manor and the fire and the sea split.

They forgot their God.

They were unfaithful.

And we get a number of these different times that God gave them over to their enemies.

Part of this is God doing what he said he would do in the law in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28.

If they did not obey, the curse was to be attacked by enemies.

The curse is also if they want to seek after other gods, then God will give them into the hands of other gods.

And this is not just one instance of forgetting

It is at least four that he mentions here.

And they forgot God more than four times in their history.

Verse 10, **"and they cried out to the Lord and said, 'we have sinned, because we have forsaken in the Lord and served the Baals, and the Ashtaroth. But now deliver us out of the hand of our enemies that we may serve you.'"**

Even though the people were unfaithful.

They cried out to God for deliverance.

To acknowledge their sin, they asked to be saved.

And the wonder of God in his mercy is that even when we are unfaithful, he is faithful.

Verse 11, **"and the Lord sent you Jerubbaal and Barak and Jephthah and Samuel and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and you lived in safety."**

This again is not an exhaustive list.

But he reminds him of all the times that they cried out for God and he came to help them.

And he sent them the Judges.

And he sent them Gideon.

I even sent them Samuel himself.

And God used these to keep them safe from all of their enemies, and let them live in safety as long as they were faithful.

They never should've had to wonder that if they cry out to God if he will deliver.

Because anytime sinners repent, and ask God for a they find it.

Verse 12, **"and when you saw that Nahash the king of the Ammonites came against you, you said to me, 'No but a king shall reign over us, 'when the Lord your God was your king.'"**

This is some important context we hadn't got before.

You see the people did not just rise up one day and decide they wanted a king.

It wasn't that they were just upset with Samuel's corrupt sons.

They saw an enemy approaching.

They saw that things were getting difficult once again.

And instead of repenting of their sins and asking God to send a deliverer.

Another enemy came.

And they did not believe God could save them this time.

Sure He had done it a hundred times before, but this one is probably too much.

This is why their demand for a king was so wrong.  
And it sure sounds like us, doesn't it?  
Even though we have seen God be faithful time and time again in our lives, we doubt.  
Another enemy comes.  
Another challenge or trial.  
And we become unfaithful.  
We laugh and mock the Israelites' repeated abandoning of God because we see it in ourselves.

Verse 13, **"And now behold the king whom you have chosen, for whom you have asked; behold, the LORD has set a king over you"**

Now they have the king they asked for.  
God has been gracious again and given them what they asked for even though they should not have it.

Verse 14, **"If you will fear the LORD and serve him and obey his voice and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, and if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the LORD your God, it will be well."**

But here is the warning.  
They have not been faithful.  
But they are called and invited to be faithful.  
Samuel is inviting and asking them to obey and serve God.  
Samuel is asking them to stop rebelling.  
He calls them to be what they should be.

And this invitation is not just for the people, but it is for the king as well.  
It is a command that the king, too needs to serve and obey God.  
And the promises that if they do, they'll be blessed.  
The generations of unfaithfulness do not remove them from the possibility of blessing.  
Listen to me, no matter how far away from God do you have been there is room and an invitation to be blessed.

It does not have to be the end of the story.

Verse 15, **"But if you will not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then the hand of the LORD will be against you and your king."**

Here's the warning.

If they do not obey, and if they continue in disobedience, then God will punish them.

If they are unfaithful in God's hand will be against them.

And there is also this principle that if the leader of their nation, if the king is being unfaithful to God then God will be against them.

We will see this throughout the rest of the Old Testament.

We will see kings make sinful decision decisions, and the people pay the consequences.

We will see this, even with David that when he sins the nation is punished.

No, America is not Israel. These promises are not written to us.

But I do think it's a reminder of the spiritual principle that the faithfulness and the holiness of our leaders matters.

And it doesn't just matter, cause we hope they make the right decisions. It matters because we need to be fully obedient to God.

Verse 16, **"Now therefore stand still and see this great thing that the LORD will do before your eyes."**

God promises to work a miracle.

To work one last incredible sign to show them that Samuel says is true.

He will do another miracle before their eyes so they do not forget that they are faithful to the very end.

Even though we know that there will be people who see this who will forget.

Verse 17, **"Is it not wheat harvest today? I will call upon the LORD, that he may send thunder and rain. And you shall know and see that your**

**wickedness is great, which you have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking for yourselves a king."**

Inventions that it's elite harvest because this is the time we don't expect rain.

This is certainly not the time that thunderstorms should be seen.

And yet God is going to send one at this exact moment.

And the reason so that they can see that they are sinners.

There may even be a principle here that when we hear the thunder rolling over the planes, it reminds us of our sin, and we should repent.

That's definitely what they should do then, but it might be something good for us always to do.

He wants them to recognize that they were wrong to ask for a king.

They should've known better.

Verse 18, **"So Samuel called upon the LORD, and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day, and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel."**

So Samuel does it and God sends the thunder in the rain.

And the people fear God.

They respond the right way and they recognize their sin.

The problem is gonna be they're gonna forget again.

I don't know the last time you stood outside and heard the thunder.

In those moments, it always reminds me of how small I am and how great our God is.

Especially as it gets louder and louder and louder, and the lightning cracks you realize the smallness in the holiness of God.

The problem is the thunder ends and the clouds go away.

And the regular worries and problems of the day pile up, and we forget.

When we start to doubt God's power and overestimate our own. Just like Israel far too often we are unfaithful.

### III. We should be (faithful) because God is (faithful) (v. 19-25).

This is what it comes down to.

Or this is what should encourage us towards faithfulness.

It is not fear of punishment.

Instead is a realization that our God is faithful to us and so we should be faithful to him.

And the same way that somebody shows love and respect and care towards us, makes us want to love and respect and care for them.

Verse 19, **"And all the people said to Samuel, "Pray for your servants to the LORD your God, that we may not die, for we have added to all our sins this evil, to ask for ourselves a king."**

The people recognize this.

They respond the right way and they ask for prayer.

They ask for forgiveness.

They asked for Samuel to mediate on their behalf.

They acknowledge that they were wrong to ask for a king.

Verse 20, **"And Samuel said to the people, "Do not be afraid; you have done all this evil. Yet do not turn aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart."**

Samuel gives his beautiful response.

He tells him they don't need to fear.

And he doesn't mince words.

They have sinned greatly and it was wrong.

But there is grace.

So now they should follow the Lord with all their hearts.

Verse 21, **"And do not turn aside after empty things that cannot profit or deliver, for they are empty."**

He wants some not to chase these other things.

Because all of the other things that make us unfaithful to the Lord are so empty.

The idols that we worship can satisfy our hearts no more than those made of wood and stone.

They cannot profit us and they cannot deliver us.

Verse 22, **"For the LORD will not forsake his people, for his great name's sake, because it has pleased the LORD to make you a people for himself."**

Here's this beautiful promise.

It is that God will not forsake us.

God does not abandon his people.

Even though these people abandoned him.

Even though his people are unfaithful time and time again.

He does not cast them out.

He does not disown them.

He does not forsake us.

And this is true, especially if Israel, God's chosen people, and it is true of all who call upon the name of Jesus.

It is true, who all bear the name of Christ God will not forsake you.

But we need to understand God doesn't forsake us because we are so incredible.

He does not forsake us because he's stuck.

It is not as if he owes it to us as if it is fair.

He does it for his own namesake and his glory.

Part of this might seem a little strange.

But I was telling us that God is faithful to us not because we deserve it but because he is so glorious.

For his own glory, he will continue to be faithful to us.

And yet this glorious God, it was far more than we can possibly imagine is pleased that we are his people.

These two things go together, even though they may feel as opposites.

And then sometimes theologians will try to puff up either God's glory or only his love.

And yet they are both here together.

God is faithful to us because of his glory, and in his glory, it pleases him to make us his.

And be holding the glory of God and contemplating the depths of his love for us and make us want to be faithful.

Verse 23, **Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you, and I will instruct you in the good and the right way.**

It makes Samuel want to be faithful.

And he says he will continue to pray, and he will continue to teach them.

Because he will no longer be their judge or the political leader.

But he will be their spiritual leader.

He will continue to pray and teach.

Verse 24, **"Only fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you."**

And he wants them to be faithful.

And what can encourage this faithfulness is considering God.

Remember what He has done.

Think back through the ages.

Remember the old stories.

Recount them to yourself of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

And this is what we should do.

We should remind ourselves of the stories of God's faithfulness.

To His people and to us.

The next time you doubt.

The next time you are tempted by things that cannot profit.

The next time you do not believe God can save.

Remind yourself of all that God has done in your life.

Force yourself to name them out one by one.

Because He is always faithful and He will always be faithful.

Verse 25, **"But if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king."**

But there is a warning.

For Israel, the warning is if they are unfaithful, they have to face consequences.

And the king will face consequences.

I will see this later with Saul he will do wickedly and he will be swept away, and God will bring a new king.

And the warning for us is that if we spend our entire life rejecting Jesus, we too will be swept away.

All that you've ever done all that you have ever achieved all the things you thought were so much better than Jesus will all burn with fire and be forgotten.

The good news of the gospel is that our God is faithful.

And if you trust in him and him alone, even when you were faithless, he is faithful.

And even when you were prone to wander, he comes to chase you.

And even as you wallow in the mud like the prodigal son, he runs out to greet you.

And even as we yell with the crowd, crucify him, he looks at us and says Father forgive them.

The faithfulness of our God defies comprehension.

And as we reflect on it as we think about it, it should make us wanna be faithful too.