

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

MONDAY Samuel began speaking to the people by reminding them of his own service record and integrity. He asked anyone who had witnessed something he had done that was wrong or evil to stand up and speak out. He promised to try to make right anything he had done wrong. But no one had anything to say against him.

I Samuel 12:1-5

Are you not amazed that no one had a bad thing to say about Samuel? Not even the opposition party! No one! You see, Samuel was a man of integrity. And integrity is what God would have you and me develop in our lives. Although the Bible does not use the word integrity, it does exhort us to be a people who do what we say we will do, and speak always the truth, and honor our commitments, and fulfill our responsibilities. That's what integrity means for you and me today. And everyday.

TUESDAY Samuel continues speaking about God's care for the people in past generations. He reminds them of God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt. Then he reminds them of God's deliverance during the past 400 years during the time of the judges. He names several of the judges.

I Samuel 12:6-11

There is a pattern in the way God has dealt with Israel, and Samuel wants the people to see it. Sin brings sorrow and trouble to the people, but when they turn again to God, He always delivers them out of it. The troubles which came upon the people came because the people turned away from following God. When sin comes into the lives of God's people, that sin has a price and it's often a high one. And the sinner pays it. We are talking about the consequences for the sin, not the eternal punishment for sin. The believer's punishment has been paid in full at the cross! But the consequences of continued sinning lie before him. That's a great reason to stay away from sin!

WEDNESDAY Samuel continues to challenge the people. He reminds them that, although God is their King (and doing the things a good king must do, such as delivering them from their enemies), they wish for a human king. And he tells them that even though God will grant them their wish, they must still obey Him, and that God's hand will be against them if they did not.

I Samuel 12:12-15

Why did the people insist on a human king instead of God? A few verses earlier, Samuel tells us that it was so they could be like their neighbors. Now Samuel suggests that it was because, in their hearts, they were headed towards rebellion against God. We need to be reminded that we will either follow God whole-heartedly, or we will find ourselves in rebellion against what He has for us. The human heart is deceitful. It goes astray easily! Our only hope is to daily set our hearts on the Lord.

THURSDAY

Samuel tells the people that his warning are not meaningless threats. The things he had been saying are true, and God will surely act in response to Israel's

disobedience. God has zero tolerance for sin. To demonstrate this, Samuel calls on the Lord to send a thunderstorm and rain, as a sign. God does so. The people, predictably, are afraid of such awesome power.

I Samuel 12:16-18

Doesn't verse 16 catch your attention? *See this great thing which the Lord has done before your eyes.* Hasn't God shown Himself to be great before our own eyes? Not so much in thunderstorms and rain (although there also!) but in the changes He has made in our lives! And in the hope He gives where there was once no hope! And in the peace which He supplies when the circumstances of life are full of unrest. And in the inner assurance we have that we belong to Him, and that we can trust Him fully!

FRIDAY The people ask Samuel to pray for them. Having heard Samuel's words, they fear that demanding a king may be more or less the last straw, and that God will now destroy them all. Samuel assured them that the issue is not that; the issue was whether or not they will go on to serve the Lord. And he told them that he will continue to pray for them -- that it would be a sin for him not to do so. Finally, he repeats the basic principle: God will bless you if you follow Him, but He will severely judge your disobedience.

I Samuel 12:19-25

Verse 20 offers us a great principle for Christian living: don't dwell on the sins and failures of the past, but move ahead with a determination to follow the Lord from this moment on. In the same way, we should not rest on past victories, but must live this moment (and the moments ahead) for Him. We are not trusting God as we should as long as we doubt His forgiveness for past sins. We are not understanding the way He works in our lives as long as we think God focuses on our sins from the past. He cares primarily about the choices we make today.

SATURDAY Saul gets off to a great start as the first king of Israel. He chooses 3,000 men to be a permanent army. Of these, 2,000 stay with him and 1,000 went with his son Jonathan. Jonathan wins a victory over the Philistines at Geba. Both the Israelites and the Philistines sense that, with a king, Israel is strong militarily. So Saul summons the people together in order to form an even larger army.

I Samuel 13:1-4

Great news became apparent to all: the days of rampant plundering by the Philistines were coming to an end. There was a new sheriff in town and his name was Saul. Can you imagine the joy which swept across the land? For 400 years, generations of Israelites had been victimized constantly by the Philistines and other nations. Now at last, relief was here! God is not hindered by years, or even generations, of sin. His power breaks the dominion of sin in our lives. There's a new master in my life; a new power on the throne! **AND THAT WILL BE APPARENT TO ALL!**
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