

PASSAGE CONTEXT

Samuel's Farewell Speech (1 Sa 12:1–25)

KEY TEXT

"Do not be afraid," Samuel replied. "You have done all this evil; yet do not turn away from the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart." (1 Sa 12:20).

Introduction

"Do not be afraid." this consolation from the man of God speaks of the hopeful idea that, despite the present circumstances; despite all signs of terror, all *might* be okay.

But how? Why? To what end?

The reply we see from today's text by Samuel comes at the turning point of the first book of Samuel, where we see the end of the rule of the judges. In ch 12, we are listening to the farewell speech by this last judge of Israel whereby Samuel is resigning his office to make way for the reign of the kings.

Statement

In the wealth of God's infinite mercy, he has chosen to preserve the lives of a wicked and rebellious human race for a time. With the chief end unto the Glorification of His name, His Spirit works within our world, revealing to the souls of mankind the means by which they might be redeemed. By His sovereign decree, it pleases God to bestow his favour upon those who do not merit it; to these souls, just as through the words of the prophet, He declares through his Son, "Do not be afraid."

I. The terrible condition of the soul separated from God.

Samuel declares, *"You have done all this evil."* What accusation can be more true of our souls being spiritually dead and apart from God?

[Referring to the whole passage] We saw the evil charged against Israel in their rejecting of their God and the coveting after a king like the wicked nations.

But what of our own rejection?

God and Man

To see the goodness of God from our perspective, we must understand where we stand with respect to God. We must understand who we are in relation to who He is.

What we find in the first and second chapters of Romans is that people are without excuse for their rebellion against God (Cf: Ro 1:18–32; 2:12–16).

"For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse" (Ro 1:20).

"For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened." (Ro 1:21).

What I am trying to show is, in order to receive the good news of the gospel, we must first come to understand the bad news.

God is Holy, Almighty, Uncreated. We, on the other hand are created, feeble, and dependant. And without any intervention from God, we are unholy, unrighteous, and only always rebelling against our creator in pride. Because of our rebellion against God we are made enemies of God, storing up wrath for ourselves on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment is revealed (Cf: Ro 2:5).

Consequences of Original Sin

Born into the sinful lineage of Adam, his guilt now lies upon our head. We have fallen from right relationship with God and find ourselves under a curse.

"But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear." (Is 59:2).

Furthermore, the apostle offending our sensibilities, teaches that far from finding ourselves partly sick because of the curse of sin, we find that we are in fact dead in our transgressions (Ep 2:1), Slaves to our nature; Bond slaves to Satan (2 Ti 2:26). And having no moral goodness of our own apart from God, we find that only every inclination of our heart wills contrary to Gods Holy Rule (Cf: Gn 6:5).

Our Sin

Concerning our Merit, our achievements, our own righteousness, where is there room for boasting? We may be the best person in the world, but having even committed just one sin against the eternal God, can any goodness of ours amend any wrong done against him?

"As it is written: 'There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.'" (Ro 3:10–12).

In the Sixty-fourth chapter of Isaiah, verse 7 (verse 6), it says, "our righteousness is as filthy rags." If this then is the condition of our righteousness, how far are we from him because of all our wickedness?

Should a soul remain in this rebellious state with their back to God, eternal separation from the presence of God awaits them in the world to come, and most terrible torments in soul and body, without end, in hell forever.

Nothing that we can do can "right the wrongs." Unless God provides a way we are without excuse and without hope.

How then can we make peace with God?

As our Lord has said, with man, that is by our faculties of power, this is impossible (Cf: Mt 19:26; Mk 10:27).

But again, what hope is there for a soul like me?!

II. What method of grace God has provided to bring us peace.

Connection to Passage

In verses sixteen to nineteen in the passage, Samuel's accusation against the people of Israel was confirmed by a sign from Lord.

"that same day the LORD sent thunder and rain. So all the people stood in awe of the LORD and of Samuel." (1 Sa 12:18).

In the Word, we learn that the Holy Spirit comes with the testimony of Jesus; He comes to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. My question is, how did Israel respond to their conviction when

Samuel spoke and the lord thundered? *“The people all said to Samuel, “Pray to the Lord your God for your servants so that we will not die, for we have added to all our other sins the evil of asking for a king.”* (v. 19).

Without the qualifier of calling to God in our mess; without the qualifier of ownership for sin; without the qualifier of a humble heart, Samuel would have never been able to say “Do not be afraid.” I say this because to say “do not be afraid, follow the lord and serve him” makes no sense to the heart who is yet afraid but still has no desire to turn and serve God. Such a confidence would be false having no foundation in truth. Without these qualifiers expressed by Israel, again, no amount of excuse for the reasons of sin and no amount of religious prayer or good works will remove the fear of punishment for our rebellion. Without ownership, we ought to be very afraid.

We must be reconciled to God.

But how?

Again, having further laboured my point, how can a good God justify an evil man such as myself?

Christ the Saviour

Lawson once said “the book of Leviticus was written to show how sinful man can find acceptance with Holy God, and he cannot come on his own. He must come by way of a sacrifice that has been prescribed by God, and the one that God has chosen as a substitutionary sacrifice is the only way that sinful man can enter into the presence of infinitely Holy God”.

And this means by which we come into the presence of God is the Gospel of Grace, fulfilled in the one and only begotten Son of God the Father, Jesus Christ.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (Jn 3:16).

As the record preaches, *“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”* (Ac 4:12).

Paul says in his first letter to the Corinthians, *“Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel . . . By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you . . . For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. . .”* (vv. 1–5).

Jesus, who, for us and for our salvation, came down from heaven, born by the virgin Mary and was made human; he fulfilled the righteousness of the Law whereby no sin was found in him, and he was crucified for us. He suffered unto death and was buried but on the third day he rose again, according to the scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and he shall come again, with glory, to judge the living and the dead; and whose kingdom shall have no end. (Cf: *The Nicene Creed*).

What we see is this, *“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God”* (2 Co 5:21).

To as many as receive it, you stand clothed in the righteous life of Jesus, as, he clothed in your filthy sin, was put to death to suffer the wrath of God on your behalf.

Praise be to our gracious and most merciful God! For he does not leave mankind to perish in the estate of sin and misery! As the apostle proclaims, *“Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our*

Lord! (Ro 7:25).

III. For what reason God's Grace abounds towards us.

The posture of the Heart

As we continue in our text, the last section from Samuel's words in this verse reads, "*but serve the LORD with all your heart.*"

This is the third command of Samuel after "do not be afraid" and "do not turn from the lord," but it is the first positive command in the phrase. This is a command that orientates the affections of listener having dealt with what they are to move away from, such as their fear of punishment and propensity to turn away from their God. What it is being said, is, *Do* serve the Lord with all your heart, begging positive action from those hearing the words of the prophet.

Here, I am speaking of the posture and orientation of the heart of the true follower of Christ.

In Exodus we read how God spoke to Moses saying, "*I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. 'You shall have no other gods before me.'*" (Ex 20:2–3). This was an identification of the God Israel was to follow as He had revealed himself at that time, and then the first of the ten commandments.

Then as we read the accounts of Jesus, we see that he summarised all the law and prophets as the greatest commandment.

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"; and, 'Love your neighbour as yourself' (Lk 10:27; Cf: Mt 22:37–40; Mk 12:29–31).

Concerning the natural and sinful state before repentance towards God and faith in Jesus, our hearts are simply not facing God. Without the right orientation of hearts turned and lives yielded to the Lordship of Christ, we cannot, nor do we know the one true God. Therefore, as people living in the rejection of the true God, we only allow the idolatry of god-like substitutes to take the reins of our hearts.

What is the condition of your heart? Do you find your heart yielded fully to Christ as your Lord? Or do you find yourself offended by a crucified messiah and the doctrines of sin and grace? Do you find a hardened heart harbouring that what offends God? As it is written, "*the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. . . those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God*" (Ga 5:19–21).

If having searched your heart, you still find a love and security more significant than your love and security in Christ—then repent of these offences, have your heart turned to God and be healed this day.

Can we not see how great the Lord's love abounds to us the unmerited?

To the humble in heart, hear the words of the apostle, "*since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.*" (Ro 5:1–5).

Love and Obedience

From the words of our Lord. "If you love me, keep my commands." (Jn 14:15).

As John elaborated later on: *"We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands. Whoever says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person. But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did."* (1 Jn 2:3–6).

It is by faith you have been Justified and not of works, however, as Luther once stated, "We are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone."

Obedience to our Lord is our calling as professors of the hope of salvation through Christ. Should no Good fruit be produced in our life; no conformity to Christ, and no difference in being to that of the ways of the world, then we stand as a witness against ourselves denying Christ through our actions.

Purpose

One might ask, what is the purpose of all this good grace? What is the purpose of Christ? Furthermore, if obedience is necessary – that is to say, naturally flowing out of the new heart gifted by God – does that mean I need to be strict and lifeless, bound as if under the law again?

Ezekiel 11:19–20; 37:27 promises that not only will we be given new hearts to know the statutes of the Lord, moreover we will be enabled by the power of the Holy Spirit to walk in them. This is the New Heart of the Born-again Christian; a heart whose orientation is conformed to, and convicted of obedience towards the Lordship of Christ as this is a Heart that has been filled with the love of God.

The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the Lord are firm, and all of them are righteous (Ps 19:7-9).

Have you been convicted of obedience toward God? Do you rejoice in Gods commands just as the psalmist?

But for what *reason* does God's Grace abounds towards us?

1 Peter 3:18 reads, *"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God"* (1 Pe 3:18).

Should any receive it, Christ has come to forgive you of all the weight of Guilt that lays upon your shoulders. By the blood of Christ he has justified you. God now looks upon you as clothed in the righteousness of Christ. But furthermore, all the more, coming to a great and essential truth, Christ came to bring you to God. God shows favour to the unmerited because he alone is to be glorified, and he will be glorified! And all things will sing glory to his name.

What Joy overflowing this is! To Know him who formed you. To be given a new heart, a heart change to see and will for and extol the most high. Praise be to God! Unto God be all the Glory! The proclamation is this – Peace with God, Peace with God!

CONCLUSION

The Israelites turned from their God, lead away by their sinful hearts. By their merits they laid sin upon sin,

they deserved to be cut off entirely. But God in his enduring faithfulness, responded with great compassion and favour towards them.

To this day, we still see his grace abound to wicked and rebellious people, such as ourselves. But like the camera's zoom function, what was once longed to be seen, we see today with great clarity. Gods revelation of grace has come into focus, and what we see great sharpness is the only means prescribed by which we may be restored to right relationship with God. To all who hear and understand, this great prophet; our priest; our King declares, "do not be afraid."

Life Group Discussion Questions

1. Referring to the chapter of 1 Sa 12. Think back to narratives of Israel such as the exodus, Why do you think that the people of Israel were so convicted when confronted by Samuel? Then, in application to ourselves, how might we be convicted by the gospel today?
2. In the sermon I talk about ownership of Sin. In the case of Israel as well as yourself, why is ownership a crucial step to reconciliation and not something to be overlooked?
3. As Christians, we understand that we are not under the law –that is, condemned by the law. However, we also come to understand that we are told to obey God and to depart from sin. (legalism vs hyper grace concepts). How are we to hold these two seeming opposites in tension with one another? (Hint: What does Ezekiel 11:19–20; 37:27 teach us).