

# Samuel's farewell speech

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[0:00] Four years on January the 20th, or January the 21st if January the 20th falls on a Sunday,! The world turns its attention to this place, to Washington DC, to the White House, where! the new President of the United States is inaugurated. He's sworn in. There's a big ceremony.

And one of the big moments in that occasion is when the new President stands up and gives his speech, his inauguration speech. There's crowds in front of the White House watching, there's millions watching on TV around the US and even around the world watching this big moment as the new President speaks. And here in 1 Samuel it strikes me it's been a time similar to this. So at the end of chapter 11, which we looked at last week, we read this in verse 14.

Then Samuel said to the people, come let us go to Gilgal and there renew the kingship. So all the people went to Gilgal and made Saul king in the presence of the Lord. There they sacrificed fellowship offerings before the Lord and Saul and all the Israelites held a great celebration.

And you can imagine the kind of schedule being drawn up for that day. Surely the people want to hear from their new king on that great day of celebration as he's finally and properly made king in Israel.

But actually we see that the old guy steps up and speaks. The old leader of God's people who wasn't even a king.

[2:07] A prophet, a prophet, a judge, a leader of God's people, but not a king. We have a king now. We want to hear from him, surely the people might be thinking.

He's old and grey. His sons were scoundrels. What's he doing? Time to give up and get out the way. Why? Well perhaps Samuel is aware that this is a bit awkward too.

And so as we will see from the beginning of his speech, he's kind of helping the people to see his integrity. His integrity.

You see, it's essentially a retirement speech that he is making here. As this new king is installed, this kind of transfer of power.

It's not the last we'll see of Samuel. He still has an important role to play as God's prophet, but as leader of God's people, that has come to an end. He has some more things to say to the people in this chapter.

[3:23] So what does he say? In verse 1, I have listened to everything you've said to me, and I have set a king over you. Now you have a king as your leader.

As for me, I am old and grey, and my sons are here with you. I have been your leader from my youth until this day.

He gets up and he addresses what might be the elephant in the room. Yes, I am old and grey, but you do have a king over you.

I have been listening to you. Even as you've been rejecting God, I have warned you of the consequences, but I have listened to you. And here is your king.

Here today. But he has something more to say than just that. Before he addresses them directly, as I said, he makes sure they're aware of his integrity.

[4:33] Kind of taking the advice of Jesus, really, before he accuses them of something. Kind of taking the plank, making sure there's no plank in his eye before addressing the speck in someone else's eye.

Making sure the people see. This is someone good to listen to. So he says this, verse 3. Here I stand.

Testify against me in the presence of the Lord and his anointed. Whose ox have I taken? Whose donkey have I taken? Whom have I cheated? Whom have I oppressed?

From whose hand have I accepted a bribe to make me shut my eyes? If I have done any of these things, I will make it right.

He's saying, have I ever taken from you? Have I ever cheated you? Have I ever oppressed you? Have I accepted bribes? And actually he says, if I have failed.

[5:38] If I have made mistakes. I will make it right. Making sure that the people realize he's sought to be a leader with integrity.

And that perhaps, what Samuel says in that verse 3, reminds us a little bit of what we looked at in chapter 8. Just maybe helpful to turn there briefly.

Chapter 8, verse 11 to 17. When he was warning them about what a king might be like. He was saying that he will be like this.

He will take, verse 11, your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses. And they will run in front of his chariots. Verse 13 there.

He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves. Verse 15. He will take a tenth of your grain.

[6:41] Verse 17. He will take a tenth of your flocks. He warns them that a king over them will be like this.

He will take. He will take. He will take. He will take from you. Take advantage of you. Take the best you have. And keep it for himself. But Samuel says, have I been like this?

He's not been perfect. But nonetheless, he's been a leader of good character. You have your leader, your new leader, your new king here before you today.

But the old one hasn't been so bad. And I think that's encouraging for us to read today. We live in an age which I think is skeptical of leaders, has mistrust of leaders.

I think we've seen that in a big way politically in the country in the last few years with that Partygate scandal. People wanting Boris Johnson to be honest. We value integrity in leaders.

[7:53] And that's the case in churches as well. It's been sad to see cases of church leaders in these last few years who failed in different ways. We want leaders with integrity.

We're not looking for perfection. We know we're human. But we want them to at least be of good character. And we can say of Samuel, we can look at him and see someone who has, all in all, been a man of integrity.

And so what's the people's response? Do they agree with what Samuel says? Well, verse 4, they say, you have not cheated or oppressed us. They replied, you have not taken anything from anyone's hands.

They agree. And Samuel goes further, actually, and says, Samuel said to them, the Lord is witness against you and also his anointed is witness this day that you have not found anything in my hand. He is witness. Even the Lord can testify of Samuel's integrity. Okay, you see my integrity.

[9:05] You see that I'm okay. Now I want you to listen to me, Israel. This is someone they can trust whose advice they can take.

And here, as he says, he's old and gray. It kind of makes me think of a grandfather speaking, giving advice to their grandchild.

That's what it kind of feels like. He's doing this out of love and concern for them and for God's and God's glory.

And the key issue that he really wants to address here is in having Saul as king is reminding them of their rejection again of God as king.

And actually showing you and this king of yours, you can still live under the reign of God. And we're going to see three things about God being king in this passage.

[10:17] So the first is this. He's a king who delivers. A king who delivers. So Samuel continues his speech after gaining their trust.

And he reminds them of God's work in the past to deliver his people from the hands of their enemies. So verse 7. Now then, stand here, because I am going to confront you with evidence before the Lord, as to all the righteous acts performed by the Lord for you and your ancestors.

He wants to remind them of what God has done in the past. The good things, the good works of his deliverance. So verse 8, what does he say? After Jacob, that's Israel, entered Egypt, they cried to

the Lord for help.

And the Lord sent Moses and Aaron, who brought your ancestors out of Egypt and settled them in this place. The Israelites, they entered Egypt.

We know the story well from Exodus. They entered Egypt. They were under the hand of Pharaoh, who kept them as slaves, worked them hard. It was hard.

[11:38] It was horrible. And these were God's people. And so they cried out to him for help. And the Lord heard their cries. And so he sent Moses and Aaron.

And as Samuel says, he brought your ancestors out of Egypt and settled them in this place. He did mighty things through these rescuers, Moses and Aaron, who the Lord used to bring them out, to lead them out miraculously from the hand of Pharaoh, who just refused to let his people go, plague after plague after plague after plague, but God softened his heart.

And they were able to pass through the Red Sea. The Lord's done that for you. The Lord delivered you. But look at this in verse 9.

But they forgot the Lord their God. They forgot. They forgot their history. They forgot how good God had been.

God who delivered them, rescued them in such a mighty way. They forgot. And so, verse 9 continues, So he sold them into the hands of Sisera, the commander of the army of Hazor, and into the hands of the Philistines and the king of Moab.

[13:06] Their enemies came against God's people. They rejected him. They'd forgotten him. And so, verse 10, And they cried out to the Lord and said, We have sinned.

We have forsaken the Lord and served the Baals and the Ashtoreths. They'd forgotten the Lord and turned to other gods instead.

And so, verse 11, After they cried out for deliverance, Then the Lord sent Jeroboam, Barak, Japheth, and Samuel.

And he delivered you from the hands of your enemies all around you so that you lived in safety. You see, if you read through the book of Judges, you'll see this more.

There's a cycle going on in the life of Israel. They cry to the Lord for help. He sends a rescuer to help lead them, escaping the hands of their enemies.

[14:06] They turn back to the Lord. They worship Him. But then they forget the Lord. And they go and serve other gods. So they cry out. They get into trouble again.

So they cry out to the Lord. And this goes on and on and on. It's a cycle. It's a cycle. But verse 12, that cycle kind of changes.

Verse 12, But when you saw that Nahash, king of the Ammonites, was moving against you, you said to me, No, we want a king to rule over us, even though the Lord your God was king.

Nahash, we saw him last week. Nahash, the eye-gouger, an awful enemy to be against them. And Samuel says, In that time, you didn't cry out to the Lord.

You said, No, we want a king. We want a king over us. They forgot the Lord. Don't you remember what He's done?

[15:12] He's delivered you time and time again. He's the one who has great power to do that. But you've forgotten Him. And you're saying, You want a human king.

All those times in Israel's history where they needed the deliverance and the Lord gave it. The Lord is their king. It's chilling words, isn't it, that Samuel says in verse 12, No, we want a king over us.

They said, Even though the Lord your God was your king. You have a king. He's the Lord Almighty. No, we want a king. And how awkward must this be?

As Samuel's saying this, In front of Saul, the newly crowned king. Verse 13, Now here is the king you've chosen.

The one you asked for. See, the Lord has set a king over you. But remember what he said in verse 12, Even though the Lord your God is king. You have a king.

[16:20] He's the Lord. But you've rejected Him. You said, No, we want a king. Now here's your king. But you keep forgetting the Lord. You've forgotten Him. He's your king.

But the Lord, He is king. King. King. The issue is they forgot.

They forgot. And they thought their ways were best. And you know what? I know I'm forgetful. I forget things all the time. I forget where I've put my keys. I forget to send emails. I forget passwords to things. I'm grateful that websites have buttons you can press saying forget passwords.

I'm grateful that Google remembers passwords. I even almost forgot my brother's birthday this year. I'm forgetful. But you know what? We even forget the Lord too. We forget to pray to Him.

[17:26] We forget the work that He has done for us. In the Lord Jesus, His deliverance for us. His rescue from sin. That hymn we sang earlier, Prone to wonder, Lord, I feel it.

Prone to leave the God I love. Those are true words, aren't they? We forget His goodness. We forget His grace to us.

And Samuel, he's showing them that you've forgotten the Lord again. And you know what? A big result of them forgetting the Lord, I think Samuel here identifies as idolatry.

So we have that in verse 10, that they'd forsaken the Lord and they'd went to serve other gods, Baals and the Ashtoreths. And Samuel says this in verse 21.

Do not turn away after useless idols. They can do you no good. Nor can they rescue you because they are useless.

[18:42] Their issue as a result of forgetting the Lord and His goodness to them is they've gone and started worshipping something else. An idol.

It's anything other than God, the Lord Almighty, being the centre of our heart's worship. It's something we think, something else other than God that we think can make our lives good and stop our lives being bad.

That's what Samuel's saying, really, in verse 21. They can do you no good, nor can they rescue you. But you think they can do you good. They think you, you think they can rescue you.

And so when the people ask for a king, a human king, and they reject God as king, they're thinking, actually, we want a king.

We want to be like the other nations around us. We think a king, he's going to rescue us. He's going to do us good. Despite Samuel's warnings. And so, their idolatry really here is knocking God off his throne and placing Saul upon it.

[19:58] Thinking that he will deliver us. And I wonder, what are the idols in our hearts? Where do we do that? Where do we forget the Lord?

And place something above him, thinking that's going to do us good and stop bad in our lives.

Maybe we pour out our lives, our whole hearts into our jobs.

And jobs are good things, but we think that's going to meet our every need. That's going to stop our lives being bad and make our lives good. Far more than God ever can.

Or into a relationship, thinking that person, they're going to make me happy. They're going to solve all my problems, meet all my needs, far more than any way God can.

And so we place all our hope in that. Relationships are good. God's designed this for them, but they're not a God thing. Or a piece of technology, that games console, that's going to solve all my problems of boredom and loneliness.

[21:08] Because I cannot be satisfied with God. Good things, but not the God thing. Not the center. Not what our hearts should be chasing after.

We forget the Lord. We forget He's gracious. We forget His deliverance for us. We forget He's rescued us from sin and death.

We forget that He loves us more than we could ever know. He's the King. He's the King who delivers us. Secondly, and more briefly as well, a King who is powerful.

Okay, Israel, so you've forgotten the Lord. You've rejected His reign. Now here is your King. Here is King Saul. And we've seen, haven't we, in 1 Samuel that he's a very handsome man.

He's a head taller than the rest. Exactly what they want in a King. He's tall, good looking, strong. He'll go and lead us well against our enemies.

[22:13] He'll go and fight our battles. That's what we need. We need someone like this guy, someone like The Rock. He used to be a wrestler. He's an actor. He's strong.

He's powerful, isn't he? If only we had him in our lives. If only he was leading our church. Everyone would come. Someone who's powerful.

Well, you know what? Israel, as you've forgotten the Lord, as you've rejected Him as King, do you realize you're rejecting the One who is all-powerful?

Verse 16, Now then, stand still and see this great thing the Lord is about to do before your eyes. Is it not wheat harvest now? I will call on the Lord and send thunder and rain. And you will realize what an evil thing you did in the eyes of the Lord when you asked for a king.

[23:24] Samuel says it's wheat harvest. It's kind of around May, June time, late spring. It would have been very dry. And unlike our summers when it's dry and hot and we get thunderstorms, there wouldn't have been any sign of rain there.

Even the thought of rain would have come to a shock to them. But Samuel says, stand still and see. Thunder is going to come. And stand in awe of God and see what an evil thing you have done.

I wonder if anybody kind of said, yeah, right, Samuel. That's not going to happen. Or it did happen.

Verse 18, Then Samuel called on the Lord and that same day the Lord sent thunder and rain.

So all the people stood in awe of the Lord and of Samuel. Thunderstorms are awesome things, aren't they?

I'm terrified of thunderstorms. But I know people who go out and watch them and love them, like amazed by them. They're awesome. We can either be terrified of them or be in awe of them.

[24:49] The power we see in them. What a powerful thing. And the Lord here was sending such a powerful thing.

A thunderstorm. The lightning flashing. The rumbles, crashes of thunder that could be heard. The time where there shouldn't be any thunderstorm at all.

And the point is stand in awe of God. See the immense power of your God. The God that you've rejected.

Verse 19, what does that say? How do the people respond? 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 their king for a king. They see as they're confronted with the great almighty power of the living God, King of heaven.

[25:56] They see their unworthiness. They see their sin. They see their foolishness in asking for a human king when they have God as king.

And so they say, Pray to the Lord for us. We have done evil. In the New Testament, a story, I guess many of us will know well, Peter and some others, they've been out fishing all night.

They caught nothing. Nothing at all. They got back to shore, and there's Jesus and he's teaching and he says to Peter, Simon Peter, he says to him, Let's go out.

Let's catch some fish. Simon would have been out all night. You're not going to catch fish at this time of day. We couldn't.

You can't, but let's go for it. And so they go out and you'll know the miracle well. They start catching some fish and their nets are so struggling that they're beginning to break.

[27:09] Jesus shows his power over nature. And what's Peter's response as he's confronted with the power of the Lord Almighty over nature?

When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, Go away from me, Lord. I am a sinful man. Wastruck by his power and sees his sin, his evil.

The people in this passage likewise see the great power of the Lord Almighty. And they say, Pray for us, Samuel.

We don't want to die. We've done evil. We've rejected the Lord's God, the most powerful of all the kings in exchange for this.

Human king Saul. And maybe you this morning, maybe again, have been struck by the awesome power of the Lord again.

[28:16] We need to remember that. We need to remember what God is like, how awesome and mighty He is. But maybe you've never quite been struck by this before.

And actually, maybe you're seeing that in your heart, you're sinful too. You're unworthy before such a great God. We are human.

We are frail. We're sinful. We're not worthy to stand before Him other than to fall under His judgment. But you know what? There is hope here too.

Because this is a king who is also gracious. He's almighty, all powerful. He is awesome. It's terrifying to fall into the hands of the living God.

But also, He is gracious. Verse 22. For the sake of His great name, the Lord will not reject His people because the Lord was pleased to make you His own.

[29:23] That's what Samuel says to them. Isn't that wonderful? The Lord will not reject His people because the Lord was pleased to make you His own.

The Lord's name and reputation is staked upon these people. He is committed to them in a covenant relationship.

He has promised blessing upon them. He has promised that He will have a people. No matter how unworthy and sinful we might be, God is willing to have us, to have mercy upon us because His nature is to have mercy.

He is a gracious God. And so that's why Samuel can say here in verse 20, do not be afraid. You have done all this evil.

You have. Yet do not turn away from the Lord but turn to the Lord. Serve the Lord with all your heart. don't go serving other idols.

[30:35] Don't go making Saul the number one king in your heart. Serve the Lord. Serve Him.

He can send a thunderstorm but He has too time and time again shown His mercy and grace. We saw that in the first point. He's a king who delivers. He's a king who has grace.

He doesn't anywhere say, well you've chosen Saul now. Make your bed and lie in it. Suffer the consequences. No, He's graciously calling them back to Him.

And so Samuel says right in the center of the passage there, verse 14, if you fear the Lord and serve and obey Him and do not rebel against His commands and if both you and the King who reigns over you follow the Lord your God, good.

You can come back to the Lord. You and the King, you can live life under this great King of Kings. Come and fear Him.

[31:50] Stand in awe of Him. serve Him. Yes, even obey Him. Obey the Lord, the King. He's given commands.

Don't rebel against Him. Obey Him. Listen to Him. Follow Him. As He says in verse 20, with all your hearts. Samuel says that is the right way for you and the King to live life.

Humble yourselves under the reign of this great King. It's very gracious. Very gracious of God. even though the Lord your God was King. Even though you've rejected Him. You can live life still under Him.

He wants you to. He wants to have a relationship with you. He's committed to His people in covenant relationship.

[32:57] And so they have this fresh opportunity to come back to serve Him, to fear Him, to obey Him. And you know what?

We continue to see that happening throughout Scripture. They'll turn away from Him again. God will bring them back.

And so committed to blessing His people that He gave His very self for them. He gave His one and only Son the King, Almighty, all-powerful, came and lived in a human body.

The Lord Jesus came to earth not to be served by us but to serve us. To give His life for us even though we're full of rebellion.

They naturally will reject Him as King. He's a King who had not a crown of gold on His head but a crown of thorns.

[34:04] And He's a King whose name is Jesus. And because of Jesus you don't need to be afraid of God and His judgments but you can live life under His rule.

Fear Him, serve Him, obey Him, our great servant King because He's done all that you need for that to happen.

What kind of King then will you choose? What kind of King will you choose? You see these people they have a choice just as we have a choice.

Samuel's laid out that very clearly in verse 14 but he says the alternative as well in verse 15 but if you do not obey the Lord and if you rebel against His commands His hand will be against you as it was against your ancestors.

You can choose to follow Him or you can choose to reject Him but if you choose to reject Him His hand is going to be against you. He's almighty, He's all-powerful and it's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

[35:23] And so this morning what will we do? Maybe we feel like we've been wandering away from the Lord and this morning we kind of have a fresh opportunity to return to Him as King to say Lord, Lord, I'm sorry for forgetting you.

Sorry for serving other gods. Help me today to follow you. Thank you for Jesus. Thank you that because of Jesus I can.

Maybe you never have bowed the knee to this God King. This morning you can. Which King are you going to serve?

Let's take kind of 30 seconds or so just to respond quietly to God in our hearts. and I'll lead us in a prayer and then Mark, Joram, and Phil will come and lead us in our final song.

ready to Almighty God, we come before you, the great King of all.

[37:06] We pray, Father, that you would help us, help us to follow you as King of our lives today, and indeed every day.

We pray that you would help us by your grace to give you the honour that you deserve as King. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.