

# (1 Samuel) Great Things God Has Done for Us

by David Guzik

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*Israel's desire for a king led to consequences, but God offers a new opportunity to serve Him today.*

**Duration:** 29:02

**Scripture:** 1 Samuel 12:21, Lamentations 3:22, John 6:68

**Topics:** "Faith Perspective", "Gods Providence"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a story about a man who calls the police after seeing a car in the surf through his telescope. The police rush to the scene but find nothing. The man insists that he saw the car and believes there are people trapped inside. The speaker uses this story to illustrate the importance of keeping perspective in our Christian lives. He emphasizes that we should focus on the great things that God has done for us and not get caught up in our own problems.

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## Transcript

to 1st Samuel chapter 12. If you didn't bring a Bible with you this morning, you can raise your hand and one of our ushers will bring one to you. You're going to want to follow along with the text this morning.

1st Samuel chapter 12. Now, on Sunday mornings we've been making our way through this book of 1st Samuel and we've been seeing how Israel is at a very important transition time in their history. They're moving away from what we call the time of the judges.

That's when Israel was ruled by leaders that sort of rose up from crisis to crisis. There wasn't a standing government and a standing throne. There was no king in Israel.

But after a while, the Israelites got tired of it and they wanted a king. But they didn't want a king for godly reasons. They wanted a king for fleshly reasons, for carnal reasons.

I mean, basically, they looked around and they said, well, the Edomites have a king and the Ammonites have a king and the Egyptians have a pharaoh. We want a king. They wanted the image of a king.

They wanted the royalty and the pomp and the circumstance. That's all what they wanted about a king. And so God gave them a king and Samuel had to deal with this before the nation.

Now, the whole nation didn't get behind the king immediately. God allowed a crisis to arise and he allowed this king that he had chosen, Saul, to come up and be the remedy in the crisis. And then the whole nation

got behind him.

And as the nation got behind Saul, the first king of Israel, Samuel, called the great assembly of the whole nation. And it's at the representatives from all the nation were standing before him in a great assembly. And Samuel's up on the platform and there's Saul right next to him.

And he's talking to them about what kind of leader Samuel was. And he's talking about all the things that God had done in the history of the nation. And now he's presenting the king before them.

Samuel, in this half of 1 Samuel, chapter 12, will be speaking to Israel about where they go now with having a king. Notice this with me, please. 1 Samuel, chapter 12.

We're going to begin at verse 13. He says, Now, therefore, here is the king whom you have chosen and whom you have desired. And take note, the Lord has set a king over you.

Notice this, won't you? You see what Samuel's saying? Samuel probably had the feeling here. Hey, Israel, here's the king that you wanted. You're going to find out he's not quite the king that God wanted for you, but he's the king you wanted.

Saul was a man who was all about image. He had the looks. He had the bravery.

He had sort of like that kingly image. But he wasn't a man who had a heart after God's own heart. That king would come later.

But you see, Saul looked the part. And that's the kind of king that the people wanted. We've been calling here on Sunday mornings.

Saul, the king from central casting, because that's who he was. He looked the part, but he didn't have the substance inside. And you can see Samuel speaking, maybe with a bit of edge in his voice, as he points to the people and says, Here's the king whom you've chosen.

Here's the king whom you've desired. Look at him. Here he is.

The people are probably starting to feel the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Maybe we shouldn't have asked for a king. Maybe we shouldn't have gone that way.

But notice what Samuel says to them here in verse 13. He says, Now, therefore, here's the king whom you've chosen, whom you've desired. And take note, the Lord has set a king over you.

Now, verse 14. If you fear the Lord and serve and obey his voice and do not rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then both you and the king who reigns over you will continue following the Lord your God. However, if you do 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 as it was against your fathers.

Friends, I think this is exciting and so relevant to our lives today before the Lord. Do you realize what Samuel's doing? He's laying it on the nation of Israel and letting them know that they chose the wrong path when they desired a king. They wanted a king out of carnal reasons, out of ungodly reasons.

And they were going down the wrong path. But you know what Samuel says to the people? He says, You went down the wrong path. You chose a king.

Here's your king. He's all about image. He's not about substance.

But nevertheless, if you'll fear the Lord and serve him today, God will bless you. Do you realize, friends, that Samuel was trying to communicate something to Israel that I think God wants us to hear this morning? One wrong turn doesn't put you out of God's plan forever. You know, Israel could have felt that way.

Gee, we wanted a king. We shouldn't have wanted a king. God gave us a king.

I guess we turned the wrong way there. Well, I guess that's it. I guess we're gone.

We're history. We'll never be in God's will again. Yes, Israel should have never sought a human king.

But now that they had one, Samuel simply calls them to serve the Lord where they're at right now. Israel needed to know and we need to know today that one wrong turn doesn't wreck our lives before the Lord God. You may be feeling that in your past.

You may be sitting here right here this morning as you sort of go through the files in your mind. You look back to something 15 years ago or 10 years ago or five years ago or five weeks ago and you look back and you think, you know what? I did this and I should have... God put a fork in the road in front of me and I chose the wrong fork. I guess I'm never getting back on God's path again.

I guess that's it. I'm gone. Oh, well, that's my life before the Lord.

Compromised forever. Forget about it. You know what? That's not how the Lord does it.

God says, listen, what's past is past and maybe you made the wrong choices and God will deal with those wrong choices in your life. But if you'll serve me right now today where you're at, I'll bless you. Friends, do you realize that? You see, instead of agonizing over the past, get right with God today.

Do what it says here in verse 14. Fear the Lord and serve Him and obey His voice and do not rebel against the commandment of the Lord. If you do that, God will bring good even out of yesterday's wrong turn.

Maybe some of you here this morning, you feel like you're on the shelf permanently because of something in your past. You're not. God can still bless your life.

God still wants to do great things in your life. God wants you to say, OK, Lord, what do you want me to do today? And He puts that road in front of you because look at it. You could still make a wrong turn today.

Look at verse 15. However, if you do 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. They made a wrong turn.

Yet today God puts them at another fork in the road. On one side is submission and obedience to God. On the other side is rebellion and disobedience.

If they choose the wrong path, God's not going to bless it. So here God puts it in front of you today. He wanted Israel to be urgent about getting right with God today.

Now, I think Samuel could look over the nation and God gave him a sense of where they were at spiritually. And as God gave them a sense of where they're at spiritually, God knew that they needed to

have the point pressed home to them. That's why Samuel continues on.

And look what he says in verse 16. He says, Now, therefore, stand and see this great thing which the Lord will do before your eyes. Is not today the wheat harvest? I will call to the Lord and he will send thunder and rain that you may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which you've done in the sight of the Lord and asking a king for yourself.

Do you see what Samuel is saying? Here he is before this great assembly of the nation, souls by his side. He's been telling them how wrong they were for choosing a king. And as he stands, he goes, I don't think you get the point Samuel is saying in his heart.

Let me press it home to you. I'm going to press it home because I'm going to pray and ask God to send thunder. I'm going to ask God to send rain right now, even though it's harvest time.

Now, friends, that would have been a real sign in that part of the world at that time, because just the whole climate and geography of Israel says you don't have thunder and rain during harvest time. That's summer. I mean, it would be like today if we lived in Southern California here and on a beautiful summer day, not a cloud in the sky.

Somebody stood up and say, I'm going to show you a sign from God right now. Today, there's going to be thunder and rain. And then all of a sudden, boom, a thunder cloud moves thunder and rain and poured down.

You say that's a sign from God that just doesn't usually happen here. You know, if you live in the Midwest, who cares? It happens all the time on a summer day. But in that part of the world at that time, it's like, wow, this is significant.

Might I say this, too? It was also a sign of judgment because you don't want rain during harvest time. That can wreck your crops. All the work you put in planting, plowing, watering, taking care of the crops, all the work you did, it could come to nothing with a few severe rainstorms.

Friends, this was a sign and this is a sign of judgment. It was a wake up call in the nation of Israel. Get serious about following God.

Why? Notice it. He says it here in verse 17, that you may perceive and see that your wickedness is great. God wants to make the point clear to you that here it comes.

You need to get serious about following me. I want you to notice what happens here. Verse 18, so Samuel called to the Lord and the Lord sent thunder and rain that day.

And all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel. Wow. I mean, first of all, it shows us what a great man of prayer Samuel was, right? That's pretty impressive.

You say, I'm going to pray to God that he would send thunder and rain. And boom, it happens. That's that's power in prayer.

But it also shows us something about the hearts of Israel. Do you realize that the only reason why God answered that prayer and the only reason why God sent the thunder and rain is because that's what would speak to the heart of the people of Israel. That was the only thing that would impress Israel with the power and the majesty of God.

They weren't respecting God. They weren't honoring God the way they should have apart from a great sign like that. Friends, I don't think that's where the Lord wants our hearts.

I think of this and I think, wait, didn't Israel know that God was capable of doing that before? What does God got to do it? I mean, every one of us here, we know that God can do great things. We know it. But do we know it? That's kind of the situation, isn't it? Israel knew in their heads that the Lord God was a God of power and majesty and might and that they should honor and respect him.

They knew that in their heads. But did they know it in their hearts? I don't think so. That's why God had to send such a dramatic sign.

And friends, there's a huge difference between head knowledge and heart knowledge. I think Satan kind of has a strategy in our culture and our society of just pumping our heads with more and more head knowledge so that we kind of think that that's how we should be towards the Lord, too. Let me kind of illustrate it to you this way.

I've used this illustration for you might have heard it from before. I think it paints the picture perfectly. It's kind of like the game Trivial Pursuit.

You know all these facts, but who cares? Like if I were to stand before you and say, what's the name of the ship that shipwrecked in Gilligan's Island? You guys know, right? You should be embarrassed to say, you know, I should be. But we all know it's the SS Minnow. Can I just say, who cares? Can you think of a more useless piece of information to be taking up some some cells in your brain than that piece of knowledge that that is a that is a piece of knowledge that you have that will never in a million years change the way you live? It'll have no impact on your life.

Zero. But it's in your head. Now, Satan would be very happy for the knowledge of God to be the same way in your life.

You know, a lot of facts about God. I know God is powerful. I know God loves me.

I know God is a God of majesty. I know I should respect God. But it's all up here, right in that compartment in your brain of what the name of the ship is in Gilligan's Island.

It never reaches down to here and touches your life the way you live. Friends, Satan is more than happy if you come here on a Sunday morning and learn lots of things about God, as long as it just stays up here and never touches your heart in your life. This 18 inches between your head and your heart, friends, that's the most important 18 inches in the whole world.

Some people go to hell because they never make that distance between the head and the heart. Knowing facts about God can't change your life. But if you let his word come into your heart and change you, oh, then it's a glorious thing.

And Israel was so hard hearted just knowing the truth about God wasn't enough. God had to sort of flex his muscle and send thunder and rain. And friends, if that's where you are in your life right now, you're in a tough place because what's the Lord going to have to do to get through to you? What are you waiting for? Some sign of judgment in your life before you know you need to honor and respect the Lord.

Don't do it. Just take his word for it now and let it touch your heart and change you. That's that's the kind of place the Lord wants us to be.

He wants us to hear the thunder of the Holy Spirit's conviction in our heart right now, right? The rain, he wants the shower of his love just to be poured out in our heart right now and you can receive it. You really can. You don't you don't have to wait for God to send a sign of judgment in your life to do that.

But Israel was in the place where they wouldn't do it. So it says in verse 18 that Samuel called the Lord and the Lord sent thunder and rain that day. And all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel.

Now pick it up in verse 19, where it says, and all the people said to Samuel, pray for your servants to the Lord, your God, that we may not die for we've added to all our sins of the evil of asking a king for ourselves. Well, now they know, right? They didn't have it in their hearts before, but now they do. And they're crying out.

They're repentant. Oh, Samuel, we see how sinful we were in asking for a king. It was out of the wrong heart.

It was out of the wrong motive. We should have never done it. Pray for us.

Now, Samuel had just shown himself as a pretty impressive man of prayer, right? So that's the man we want praying for us. They're saying, please pray for us, Samuel. But you see the distance between the people and God.

They say something very revealing in verse 19. Did you see that? You noticed it, right? Pray to the Lord, your God. That's how they thought of the Lord.

Samuel's God. They didn't think of the Lord, our God, but the Lord, your God. And they saw their sin of wanting a king, but they saw it too late.

Now they're stuck with a king. Now it's like, oh, Lord, what do we do now? We've added to all our sins. And you might see yourself in that place right now.

You think, oh, Lord, what did I do? I don't know. Where am I at, God? What should I do? Maybe everything's ruined. And maybe that's how Israel is feeling right now.

God's going to always make it rain during harvest time. He's going to punish us. He's going to reject us.

He's going to cast us away. Lord, I guess we're just finished. No, look at what Samuel says in verse 20.

Then Samuel said to the people, do not fear. You've done all this wickedness, yet do not turn aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart. And do not turn aside, for then you would go after empty things which cannot profit or deliver, for they are nothing.

I love what Samuel says here. First of all, he takes their sin very seriously, right? He doesn't say, ah, don't worry about it was nothing. No, he says you have done this great wickedness.

Yes, you're right. Israel, you're finally seeing it. It was great wickedness and you did it.

Yet Samuel does not want them to dwell on the sin of the past, but he wants them to get serious about walking with the Lord today. I like how the Living Bible translates this verse. Make sure now that you

worship the Lord with true enthusiasm and that you don't turn your back on him in any way.

Walk with the Lord today. My friends, I don't know, maybe somewhere back in the past, maybe it was a long time ago, maybe it was a short time ago. Maybe you took a wrong path and you're following the Lord and you're wondering, well, maybe it's all gone now.

Maybe everything's ruined. No, God puts before you right now, today, a new opportunity to serve you. His mercies are new to you every morning.

And I think, what are you going to do today? What will you do today? You know, my friends, you can't do anything about yesterday. And right now, today, at the present moment, you can't do anything about tomorrow. Where can you serve the Lord? Right now, today, at the present moment, all we can do is not turn aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart.

Let me tell you something is that, plain and simple, Satan would love for you to live in the past or in the future. Oh, he'd love you to live in the past. Maybe your mind's just filled, you're just nostalgic about the glorious days of the past, and that's where you live.

Or maybe you're tormented over the sin or the pain of the past. And that's all you can think about. That's all your focus.

Satan would love for you to live there. Or Satan's happy if you live in the future. You know, someday I'll get right with God.

Wow, you know, wouldn't that be right? Yeah, you know, someday I'm really going to do that. Yeah, I'll do that someday. You know, someday I'll really turn it over to the Lord.

Someday I'll follow Jesus. Someday I'll do it. Satan doesn't mind if you live in the future.

You know why he doesn't mind if you get right with God tomorrow? Because tomorrow never comes. It's just today after today after today. No, Satan doesn't mind if you live in the past or if you live in the future.

Where he does not want you to live is right now in the present. That's why the Lord says right now today I put before you two paths. Which way are you going to go? So he just says simply listen.

Rejecting the Lord and turning aside, it just doesn't work. That's what he says here in verse 21. And do not turn aside for then you'd go after empty things which cannot profit or deliver, for they are nothing.

You know, it's a precious place in our walk with God when we learn that principle. That as tough as it might be sometimes following the Lord, sometimes it's tough, right? You should see what it's like rebelling against God. What you think you think people who are rejecting the Lord have it all easy? Sure, you've got trials.

You've got afflictions. But what you think you're going to make your life better by distancing yourself from the Lord? It isn't easy to come to the place where we understand that. We usually learn by bitter experience that nothing else can profit or deliver, as Samuel said.

But isn't it wonderful to be able to say what Peter said to Jesus in John chapter six? Peter said to Jesus, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. You come to the place, you say, you know what, Jesus, it's not easy following you, but it's better than anything else that's out there. I'm going to stick

with you, Lord.

What a gift it is to know that as tough as it might be serving God, it's only worse to turn aside from it. And that's where the Lord wants Israel to be, and he wants us to be. And he makes it clear why.

Look at here, verse 22. He says, for the Lord will not forsake his people for his great namesake, because it's pleased the Lord to make you his people. You know what he's communicating there? Love.

God's pleased with you. God won't forsake you. He loves you.

Friends, we scratch our heads. We think of how God deals with Israel and say, I don't know, Lord, why are you stuck with him? Why don't you go find a more cooperative people? Why doesn't God just give up on Israel? Because he loves them. Why doesn't God just hold against them the sin of the past? Why is he willing to put away the sin of the past? Because he loves them.

Why is God willing to give them a new start and give them new mercies every morning? Because he loves them. Only God's love can make any sense of this. And, you know, it's the same in your life and my life, too, isn't it? If you think that you can figure it out some other way, then God just loves me.

And I don't know. I don't think you're seeing it clearly enough. That's why the Lord extends his grace.

Then Samuel goes on, verse 23, and he says, Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord and ceasing to pray for you. But I will teach you the good in the right way. What a heart Samuel has.

Do you realize that Samuel was stepping down from this place of prominent national leadership? Samuel was the one who had led the nation. But now King Saul was right beside him. And now the nation is behind him.

And the nation is getting their head in the right place. And Samuel knows, I'm passing the torch on to Saul. Here you go, Saul.

Now, some guys would sulk after that. Samuel's going, they didn't want me to lead them. I'm not going to pray for them no more.

Fine, have Saul pray for you. Yeah, you'll see. Just wait.

No, Samuel said, you know what? I'm not going to stop praying for you guys. I love you. I'm going to keep teaching you.

Far be it from me that I would cease to pray for you. Isn't that precious? You know, many would say, I promise I'll start praying for you. That's not what Samuel says.

Starting to pray was an issue. He was always praying for them. He said, I'm not even going to think about stopping to pray for you.

Friends, that just gives us a little sermon just in that verse right there. How it's a sin for a leader of God's people to stop praying for those people. Whatever place God has given you a place of leadership in your family, in your job, whatever sphere the Lord has given you any kind of leadership, you better be praying for those people.

That's the minimum. You need to pray for them. So Samuel said, I'm not going to stop praying for you.

But he also said, I'm going to keep teaching you. Did you see that at the end of verse 23? But I will teach you the good in the right way. Yes, he would pray, but he would also teach.

Samuel said, I'm going to keep doing that, even though now that I'm passing the torch of leadership on to Saul. Then he wraps it up here in verses 24 and 25. He says, only fear the Lord and serve him in truth with all your heart.

For consider what great things he's done for you. But if you still do wickedly, you will be swept away, both you and your king. Friends, don't you see that right now Samuel wants Israel to see that they're at that fork in the road, aren't they? He says, listen, despite all that's gone before, yes, you were wrong in choosing a king, but God hasn't put you on some permanently wrong path.

Here you're at the fork of the road again. What are you going to choose? Now, that's true for each and every one of us today, isn't it? God sets before you right now, today. And what are you going to do with me today? I can show you a guaranteed way to go on the right path.

Samuel alludes to it in verse 24. He says, for consider what great things he has done for you. Friends, if you will consider what great things God has done for you.

Then you'll serve him. All of our service, all of our obedience, all of our love for God is put in that context. We do it because of the great things he has done for us.

Now, we don't serve God to persuade him to do good things for us. No, we simply understand that he has done great things for us and we receive those things by faith. Then we serve him because of the great things that he's done for us.

I think it's a beautiful point for us to touch on on the Sunday before Thanksgiving. You and I need to consider what great things the Lord has done for us. If you don't consider that, if you don't focus in on that, then your whole Christian life will be put in a wrong perspective.

You can only keep perspective in your Christian life if you keep focused on what great things he has done for you. Satan wants you to think that the Christian life is all about what you do for God. It's not.

It's about what great things he's done for you. And God wants your mind filled with the knowledge of those great things. And if you lose that perspective, then everything's distorted.

You heard a great story that illustrated that this week. It wasn't too long ago down in Seal Beach that the police got a call. 9-1-1.

Urgent. A guy calls and he says, I live in a beachfront home and I just got a telescope and I've been looking out on the beach. And you know what I saw on the beach? I saw a car in the surf.

And I can see it from my house. There's the car. It's at the surf line.

And the waves are pounding on it. There's got to be people trapped in that car. Send out the police right away.

So the squad cars went. The sirens were blaring. They're tearing through the street.

They went to the beach, the about place where the guy said it would be. And they went. They couldn't see anything.

Nothing. No car, no anything. They searched up and down the beach.

Car couldn't have just disappeared. What happened? They look all over the place. Can't find a thing.

So they go and they talk to the guy and the guy says, No, listen, I can see it. I'm looking through my telescope. I can see that car.

You need to help those people. The police went to the guy's house and they went up on his patio and they looked through his telescope. There was a car right there in the telescope.

And they went over the beach and saw what it was. And it was a Barbie-sized toy car there in the surf line. It was about a foot long.

But the guy was looking at it through his telescope. And he really thought, you know, here's a Corvette or something there at the surf line being assaulted. And there's somebody dying inside.

It was a little toy Barbie car. The officer said if he would have just panned his telescope up from the ocean a little bit, he would have realized what he was looking at. My friends, you and I know exactly what we do in our lives, right? We focus in on something.

And man, it seems so big and so overwhelming. We don't even know how we can deal with it. Oh man, our whole lives are ruined.

Look at this. Just focus. That's terrible.

Friends, if you do just what this man did, if you just pan back a little bit and take a look at the big picture and take a look at the great things that he's done for you, it puts everything in perspective, doesn't it? How many times we're just dialing 911 to heaven. Oh Lord, look at this. This is crazy.

Look at this. This is crisis. I need help.

Send the police right away. Oh God, help me. Now, you know what? You need to bring your needs to God.

You need to bring your concerns to God. But put it in the bigger picture. Understand what great things he's done for you.

Too many of us, we tend to magnify our problems and lose sight of those great things that the Lord has done for you. You fill your heart with that. And you know what? You're going to love God and serve Him so naturally just because you're overwhelmed with a feeling of gratitude towards Him.

Friends, that's where the Lord wants your heart. That's where He wants my heart. Let's give Him our hearts right now in prayer.

Let's pray together. Father, we need that, Lord. We need to have our hearts filled with gratitude before You, Lord.

We need to consider together what great things You have done for us. And so, Lord, we simply ask that right now You'd fill our hearts with that awareness. We want to know the greatness of the work of Jesus.

We want to know the greatness of what You've given us by the Spirit of God. We want to know the blessings You've given us in our homes, in our jobs, in our lives before You, Lord. You've been so good to us.

Father, we don't want to be before You this morning pretending that we don't have any problems. Lord, we just want to put in perspective. We want to receive and know all the great things You've done for us.

Lord, I want to pray especially for people here this morning who've been living in the past or living in the future. Lord, won't You move our hearts to that place where we're living for You right now? Draw hearts unto Yourself, Lord, to do that work this morning. We want to love You and worship You together.

In Jesus' name.

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