

Real Challenges

1 Samuel 11-12

Introduction: 2 Corinthians 10:3-6; Ephesians 6:1-11 - This story of Israel's first conflict under their new king (1 Samuel 11) should remind us that we are in a battle that requires all of us.

Precept: Saul is a team player here, he sends a message and we can't know why the people came in numbers, but most commentators agree that Samuel was the real draw; but God is working and the results prove significant.

Samuel's farewell: Samuel's faithful ministry (12:1-5); God's witness to Israel (12:6-15); Important commitments (12:16-25)

Samuel's Faithfulness - 1 Samuel 12:1-5 - First, Samuel submitted to scrutiny (12:3a). Second, identify how I have taken, defrauded, oppressed or been influenced? Third, I am prepared to make any and all things that are wrong, right. (John 3:20-21)

Precept: True faithfulness is characterized by meaningful accountability and both parties are honest and forthcoming.

God's Witness - 1 Samuel 12:6-15 - Samuel reminds Israel that God is always faithful, keeping his word and Israel's response is "*they forgot the Lord their God*" (12:9).

Precept: Real safety/security is not by human sources, led by armies and generals; real safety is standing behind the Lord, obeying and trusting him for what we face.

Important Commitments - 1 Samuel 12:16-24 - Samuel will pray; (12:23) and God will be faithful to his promises (12:22).

Precept: We know enough about God to know what to expect from Him; it's me, it's us that is the constant variable. (12:14-15, 24-25)

Conclusion: Structures and organization cannot change us; what's in our hearts and who we are truly committed to is far more important. What will God's people do with God? That is the real question; a king won't change a thing.

If we love people we are part of their accountability structure. Accountability is an abiding tool of spiritual maturity.

The covenant renewal at Gilgal is in a line of renewals for Israel (Exodus 32-35; Deuteronomy 29) and reminds us that God is full of mercy and grace towards his children. Yet Israel remains compromised. (Matthew 18:21-22; 26:69-75)

In the final analysis the most pressing issue was not the external problem of national leadership; it was in internal problem of faithfulness to the God.