

1 Samuel Chapter 12

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[0 : 00] Our heart's desire, O Lord our God, as we meet this morning, is that we might bless you, we might worship and praise and adore you, not only with our lips and with our bodies, but with our very soul, with our spirit, with that part of ourselves which is the very essence of who we are, the very centre of our being.

O Lord, we thank you that you are the God who deserves such worship. You are the God who deserves not simply the things that we do, the worship of our hands, you're not the God who only deserves the worship of our lips, our praises and song, you're not only the God who deserves the worship of our mind, our thoughts and our thinking, you're the God who deserves the worship of our very soul, our heart, our everything.

Everything that we have comes from you, everything we are is your gift to us and everything you've given is been given so that, yes, we might enjoy you and the creation that you've made and that we might glorify you, the God who is the source of all things.

We thank you so much, O Lord our God, that this is possible. Where once it wasn't possible, once we were alienated and strangers to you, once we could not even speak your name with understanding or comprehension, once we were ignorant of you because of the blindness of our hearts and our lives because of sin.

But we thank you that by your great grace and mercy you did not leave us in our sin, you did not leave us in the mire and the mud and the filth of our own making, but you came to us in Jesus Christ your Son.

[1 : 39] We thank you that, Jesus, you got down in the mud with us in that sense. You stooped down and entered into our world that you might not leave us there, but lift us out and place us upon that rock of salvation.

You might lift us up, cleanse us from our filth, that you might make us your children, your friends, your dearly beloved. We thank you for that wonderful grace.

We thank you for the cost that it cost you for us to be cleansed of our sin and set free. It cost you your very Son and his life, his death upon the cross, his blood shed in our place, his substitutionary death, that he might atone for all our sins.

Oh, we thank you that you were willing to pay such a high price to have us for yourself, such a great cost that we might be rescued and brought into your family and made to be, Lord, those who have received of your blessing, the blessing of sins forgiven, the blessing of eternal life, the blessings which are untold in number.

We've only just scratched the surface in life this far, but we know there is much, much more to come. Oh, Lord, grant that even this morning as we think upon who you are and what you've done for us and what you're doing in the world today, we pray, oh, Lord, that our hearts may be moved and stirred to bless you, to worship and adore you just as we've sung, not just through this day but through the week, not just through the week but through the month, not just through the month but through the year, not just through the year but through our lives, oh, Lord.

[3 : 15] We want to be those who ever worship and adore you until that day when you take us to be with you in heaven. We shall be joined with all the saints, all those who've gone before, all those for whom Christ died and there we shall, that great number, lift you perfect and sinless worship and praise.

And, oh, Lord, we long for that day and look forward to that day when you bring all things to their culmination and completion. We ask that, Lord, we might be ready for that day, prepared for that day, living in the light of that day.

For we ask these things now. We bring to you our praise, oh, Lord, our God, in the name of Jesus Christ, your Son. Amen. We're going to turn to God's Word together and 1 Samuel and chapter 12. Those of you who come regularly on a Sunday morning will know that we've been looking at the life of Samuel. We're not doing the whole of 1 Samuel but just the life of the prophet, the judge Samuel. And we've been looking the last few weeks about how he has dealt with the people's request for a king and how the Lord has spoken to them of the wrongness of this but also how he's provided for them a king as they wanted in the person of Saul.

[4 : 33] And so we're going to pick up from chapter 12 and read the whole of the chapter where in the NIV it's got the title Samuel's Farewell Speech. I think Samuel probably thought it was his farewell speech.

Which in one sense it is to the people though he still had much to do as we'll see in the weeks ahead. But we're going to read together this chapter and then draw from it some help and enlightenment concerning our relationship with God later.

Here is God's faithful Word. Samuel said to all Israel, I have listened to everything you said to me and 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've been your leader from my youth until this day. 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?

[5 : 42] If I've done any of these things, I'll make it right. You've not cheated or oppressed us, they replied. You've not taken anything from anyone's hand. 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, they said. Then Samuel said to the people, it is the Lord who appointed Moses and Aaron and brought your ancestors up out of Egypt. Now then, stand here because I'm going to confront you with evidence before the Lord as to all the righteous acts performed by the Lord for you and your ancestors.

After Jacob 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.

But they forgot the Lord their God. 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 who fought against them. They cried out to the Lord and said, we have sinned. We have forsaken the Lord and served the Baals and the Ashtoreths. But now deliver us from the hands of our enemies and we will serve you.

[6 : 55] Then the Lord sent Jerobal, Barak, Jephthah and Samuel and he delivered you from the hands of your enemies all around you so that you lived in safety.

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 your king.

Now here is the king you've chosen, the one you asked for, see, the Lord has set a king over you. 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.

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. 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 to 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.

[8 : 00] 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 Samuel. 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.

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. Do not turn away after useless idols.

They can do you no good, nor can they rescue you because they are useless. For the sake of his great name, the Lord will not reject his people, because the Lord was pleased to make you his own. As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you. And I will teach you the way which is good and right. But be sure to fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart.

Consider what great things he's done for you. Yet if you persist in doing evil, both you and your king will perish. May God add his blessing to his word.

[9 : 13] Please have your Bible open to 1 Samuel and chapter 12. And that will be helpful as we go through this event in the life of Samuel and the life and lives of God's people.

During the 1970s, I think it was particularly a new type of movie emerged onto our screens. It was the disaster movie. Several big budget films famously began during that decade and produced many others since.

Films with huge cast and often with the very top actors of their day. The towering Inferno. The Poseidon Adventure. Airport. And many, many more set this mould for films which even up to present day speak of impending doom.

Either upon a small group or even upon the whole world. In each of those films, there's always a common theme. And that common theme is that you find there's a group of people.

[10 : 23] The story centres around. A group of people who've become trapped. A group of people who've become caught up in the situation so that they are in extreme danger.

And they are surrounded by all sorts of threats. And as the story goes on, often one or two of them will die or be killed or whatever. Their only hope is that someone will rescue them.

Either a hero within the midst of that small group or someone from the outside who will lead them out of danger to safety. Now throughout the Bible, one reality is continually declared concerning the condition of ordinary everyday people.

We are all trapped and facing impending disaster. That's the story, really, of the Bible. That's how it paints the picture of life. And sometimes that's illustrated in a very catastrophic way, which engulfs everyone.

Think of the great flood of Noah's day, when only a few escaped that terrible disaster. But it's also witnessed in individual lives as well, where we see the everyday traumas that follow an individual as their life begins to fall apart.

[11 : 36] King David, particularly, in the latter part of his years, we see the disaster as he becomes oppressed by all sorts of difficulties, ultimately, and sorrows.

Now what's the cause of these disasters? In the films, of course, they're caused by all sorts. They could be terrorism. They can be natural disasters. They can be aliens. They can be meteors. They can be all sorts of things.

But the disaster that we're talking about, which has entrapped all of humanity, is anything but natural, anything but worldly.

In every case, in every situation, the same cause lies at the roots of the tragedy, and that is sin. It's not something that's from the outside, a volcano or a meteor or whatever it may be.

It's something that rises from the very inner heart of every single one of us, whether that's lust, whether that's pride, greed, hate, and so on.

[12 : 39] From within, there erupts an uncontrollable tsunami of destruction into that life and lives around a mountain. But wherever that disaster is found, wherever disaster is found in the world, it always has, first of all, begun with sin.

Go right the way back to Genesis and chapter 4. We find there the very first act of terrorism and murder. We find just before Cain, in a jealous rage of hatred, destroys the life of his brother.

God says to him, sin is crouching at your door. It desires to have you. You must rule over it. Every sin makes us captive, makes us its slave, traps us in a place of mortal and eternal danger.

So Jesus says, whoever commits a sin is a slave to sin. The vital question is how do we escape? That's the reality of the circumstance. That's the reality of the situation. Entrapped, ensnared, enslaved, awaiting disaster unless we can escape.

[13 : 57] And this is where 1 Samuel has a lot to help us, a lot to say to us of importance and relevance. See, the people of God were in another dangerous predicament, again of their own making.

Samuel's final words before he hands over the leadership, as it were, of the nation to Saul, are words which are to help them to escape from the predicament they find themselves in and to deliver them from finding themselves in it again and again and again.

Notice how he says to them in verse 17, the evil thing you did. So they are sinful people.

They are people who have sought to replace God with a king of their own desire, have sought to put their will over God's will. You might say, well, that doesn't seem all that sinful or bad or wicked, but it

is.

It's the very root, it's the very cause of every single sin is saying, I want rather than what God wants. My will above God's will. They have sinned.

[15:06] And before you say to yourself, well, I don't think that applies to me, the truth is that every single one of us is ensnared by our own sin. Every single one of us battles with and is awaiting, in one sense, the opportunity for sin to entrap us.

That's true before we come to faith in Christ. And the sad truth, it's a problem we have even when we do become Christians. Sin is still there. It's still a problem to us. The Apostle John, as he writes to Christians in his first letter, says this, if you think you have no sin, you deceive yourselves. In fact, he goes on and puts it more strongly, if you say you haven't sinned, you make God out to be a liar. So this is a real problem for every single one.

Whether you're a Christian, whether you're not a Christian, sin is always there. The problem is that once we're hooked by sin, it's very hard to get free.

When sin has got its claws into us, it's very hard to break loose. There's a very famous clip which you can see on YouTube about Richard Whiteley, famously went on to do that countdown program.

[16:22] But back in 1977, he interviews a man with a ferret. And the man gives him the ferret to hold. And he's a bit cautious, says Richard Whiteley, I don't want to hold it. The man says, don't worry, it doesn't bite. As soon as he holds it, it bites onto his finger and he can't get it off.

It won't let go. He's there for minutes and minutes and ages while this ferret has got this hold on him. Well, sin is worse than that. Once we are bitten by it, the bug, if we can put it that way, of sin, it's impossible to eradicate without Christ.

Samuel realises the very great danger that the people are in, that this sin that they have committed, this sin of asking for a king, of seeking to put their will above God's will, is the beginning of something disastrous for them, and will lead to great disaster unless it's nipped in the bud, unless it's dealt with once and for all.

So as soon as Saul is made king, immediately Samuel begins to speak to them. They are in grave danger. Time is of the essence.

Again, in those disaster movies, things are happening, like the water level is rising, or the oxygen is running out, or the fire is encasing the building. Time is of the essence.

[17:35] It's part of the drama, as it were, of the situation. They haven't got much time, and that's the reality for us as well. We haven't got time to muck about. We haven't got time to play with sin, or to think that it'll be sought itself out.

We've got to nip it in the bud. We've got to deal with it there and then, before it takes further hold, before it spreads. So what does Samuel say here? What does he say that helps the people to extricate themselves, to be rescued from, to be set free from, to be brought into that path of safety? What does he say to us? Well, the first thing that Samuel does may seem to be quite peculiar. He says in chapter 12 and verse 3, Now you have a king as your leader.

As for me, I'm old and grey. My sons are here with you. I've been your leader from my youth until this day. Here I stand, testifying against me, in the presence of the Lord and his anointed.

Whose ox have I taken? What does he do? He begins by removing from them any excuse for rejecting him as God's appointed leader. God had placed him there.

[18:49] If you know the story, as you look to the life of Samuel, from a boy God spoke to him and set him apart to lead the people. And he'd done it all his life and had been a great time of peace and prosperity and blessing on the nation.

But now they chose to get rid of him. They chose to sideline him. That they might have a king of their own kind. And so he removes the excuse.

What have I done that you should do this? That you should reject the person that God has appointed? Have I taken things from you? Have I been taken bribes to see you oppressed? Have I stolen? Have I done things wrong?

No. They have no excuse to sin against God. The trouble is, of course, that when we find ourselves in trouble, we always like to find a scapegoat.

We like to find an excuse. We want to excuse our sin and we particularly like to blame other people if we can. And that goes all the way back again, back to Genesis in chapter 3.

[19:45] When Adam and Eve ate of the apple, God says to Adam, what have you done? He says, oh, it was the woman's fault who you gave me. She did it. And then he says to the woman, what

have you done? Oh, well, it was the snake's fault because he tempted me.

No ownership of their own sin. Some of them removes their first line of defense. You've got no excuse for doing what you've done. Dear friends, for you and I, we may have found ourselves acting sinfully.

And we might say, well, it's that person's fault. It's because my parents brought me up this way. It's because that person hurt me. It's because of the way that that person influenced my life.

Lord, we can't do that. We can't pass the buck to other people. The fact of the matter is, if we've got the dirty hands, then we've done the dirty deed. And yes, we may have been influenced by other people and people may have caused us harm and people may have let us down.

But in the end, we are responsible for our own actions. We are responsible for ourselves. We are accountable for ourselves. And so, dear friends, let me say to you that the first thing you've got to do is remove that excuse and say, well, the reason I do this is because they did that.

[20 : 56] Samuel says, look, you've got no excuse to reject me. Then, of course, Samuel points to them that they've got no excuse to reject God. Notice how he speaks about how God led them, how he provided for them, how he helped them, how he protected them, even when they sinned against him again and again.

He says there in verse 7, now then stand here. I'm going to confront you with the evidence before the Lord as to all the righteous acts performed by the Lord for you and your ancestors. He talks about them being brought out of Egypt and set free.

How, again, they sinned against God, but again he sent them Jeroboam. That's another name for Gideon, verse 11. Barak, Jephthah, these are all the judges.

He delivered you from the hands of your enemies, all around you. So you lived in safety. God had done all these things again and again and they had no reason to blame God, no reason to reject him.

But again, the truth is that often we can blame God for our own sins, for our own messes. We can say, well, God, if you'd given me what I wanted, I wouldn't have had to go and seek after it for myself.

[22 : 05] If you'd given me more money, then I wouldn't have been tempted to fiddle my tax returns. If you'd have given me the husband or the wife that I wanted, then I never would have had that affair or I never would have fallen into that sin.

Even if we don't say it, we think it. And sadly, for many people who are not Christians, there can be that attitude again. The reason I'm not a Christian, going back to Samuel, is because of this person and the way they behave.

How can I follow Christ when this person who says they're a Christian acts that way? Faith is not in the person, your faith is in the God. Well, then you say, well, God, I look at the problems around about me in this world, I see the disasters that are taking place, the atrocities that are done in some God's name.

And I think, how can I put my trust and faith in you? But in the end, ultimately, we are rejecting God. We're using excuses to hide behind so that we can continue to do what we want to do, continue to sin in the way we want to sin, continue to harden our hearts.

Some people, of course, will say, well, it's not so-and-so's fault or my fault that I sin in this way. That's the way God made me. That's my temperament.

[23 : 19] That's my nature. I can't help gossiping because that's just the way I am. James says this, when tempted, no one should say, God is tempting me.

For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone. But each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desires and enticed. You cannot blame God for your sin. You cannot say, well, this is the way God made me. No, this is the sinful nature that we've inherited. It's not the way God made us. God made humanity perfect.

He made us sinless. But Adam and Eve sinned, and in sinning opened the floodgates of sin that has polluted and corrupted every single descendant of theirs, including you and me. Our hearts are desperately wicked, deceitful above all things.

One of the things we've got to do is face up to that. We can't blame other people, and we cannot blame God for rejecting them. There's no weight in that.

[24 : 26] It's an empty, factious excuse. And then there's one other thing that comes out here. The people rejected prayer, and they had no excuse for rejecting prayer.

Notice how Samuel points to the fact that twice, when God's people prayed in the past, once in Egypt, once when they had sinned and were in the hands of their enemies, they prayed.

Verse 9 and 10. They cried out to the Lord and said, we've sinned, we've forsaken the Lord, and he sent their deliverers.

Whenever there was trouble, in other words, in the past, God's people had prayed. Whenever there was a problem, they had turned to God and said, God, help us, deliver us. They had called upon him, and again and again he'd done it. But here, when a problem arises to these people, they don't do that.

Verse 12. When you, but, so there's a difference. He delivered you when you prayed, but when you saw Nahash, king of the Ammonites, was moving against you, you said to me, no, we want a king to rule over us.

[25 : 32] They didn't pray, they didn't cry out to God, saying, God, enemies are coming, difficulties come, you've provided, you've helped us before, save us. Now they think of their own solution.

No, we want a king. And here you can see again the very heart of the problem. What is it that's happened? Very directly, no, we want a king to rule over us.

Verse 12. Even though the Lord your God was your king. There's an absolute outright idolatry, which is the replacement of God with something or someone else.

They were substituting God for a king. Now there's no excuse for sin. Also, wonderfully for us, for those of us who are Christians, there's even more or less excuse for any sin, because God has provided for us a way out when we attempted to sin.

Just as he did with prayer. In the past, when they were in trouble, they prayed. That was the way out. God saved and rescued them. Now, they had a way out, but they didn't take the way out. They sought their own way out. God provides for you and me, dear friend, a way out from sin.

[26 : 42] None of us have any excuse for sin. Paul writes to the Corinthians in chapter 10. No temptation has seized you except what is common to man.

God is faithful. He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it. What a gracious God he is. What a providing God he is. There's a way for us to be free from sin. There's a way for sin not to master us and rule over us. It's a way provided by God, but there are times when we do not want to take it.

God doesn't accept their excuses for sin and neither does Samuel. He calls the people to account, to face up to what they've done. You might say, well, what?

This sentence is a bit negative. And Samuel's a bit negative. It's his farewell speech. When you've got a farewell speech, it's a bit of a party, isn't it? They say, thank you for all you've done and all support you've given me. Thank you. It's great.

[27 : 40] And now I'm retiring. And thank you for the gold watch I accept and so on. This isn't much of a retirement speech. Why is he hammering on about sin? Why do I hammer on about sin?

Why do other preachers keep going on about sin? Can't they talk about flowers and nice things and clouds and sunshine and all those lovely fluffy bunnies? Well, because we have to talk about sin.

Because, yes, the Bible talks about sin. But it's only when we accept and face up to the problem that we can find the cure. It's only when we accept and face up to the problem of our sin that we can know forgiveness.

Only by acknowledging the trouble and the disaster that we're in that we can know safety, restoration and peace. Those people down in the bowels of the Poseidon adventure or those people on the roof in Taring Inferno.

It's only because they really recognize they're in so much trouble that they sought for help. It's only when you realize what problem sin is in your life. It's only when you realize what harm it does, what disaster it causes, that you will actually begin to seek after the living God who is able and willing to rescue you from that sin.

[28 : 49] To save you from it. Bring you out into safety. As long as you live with your head in the sand. As long as you think that you've got a reason and excuse for living sinfully. Then you'll continue to do so.

Without seeing the disaster that is coming upon you. To impress upon these people the severity of the situation and that Samuel wasn't just talking a load of baloney.

God sends them a rainstorm and a thunderstorm at the very height of the dry season. That's why he says it's the time of the harvest. In other words it's the time when everything is bone, bone dry. They haven't had rain for weeks and weeks. But instead of that suddenly there's a thunderstorm and rain. As Samuel predicted there would be. This is God. God showing up. God giving his sign. God sending conviction. To them. To impress upon them of the reality. And because of that we then see how in the people's lives and in Samuel's words.

[29 : 47] The way out of danger. The way out of the trap into which we have fallen by our own foolishness. And the first thing is this confession of sin. Verse 19. People all said to Samuel.

Pray to the Lord for us. 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. They acknowledged for the first time they had sinned before God. John's letter. First letter. Chapter 1. If we confess our sins. God is faithful and just. And will forgive us our sins. And purify us from all unrighteousness. That's the wonderful thing.

We've got to begin with accepting. Acknowledging and confessing. Not confessing to a priest. Not confessing to another person. Confessing to God. It's again. God we've sinned. Not other people. Firstly. Confession of sin.

And that comes from the heart. See God doesn't need to send you. You may say. Well yeah. If God was to send a thunderstorm. And speak to me about a thunderstorm. Or God was to send an earthquake.

[30 : 47] Or something like that. Or if Jesus was to stand before me. Then I'd really believe what you're saying is true. And I'd put my faith in him. But God doesn't need to do that. Rather he sent his Holy Spirit.

Into the world. To do that very job. The Holy Spirit. Jesus said in John 16. When he comes. Will convict. Convince. Prove to. The world.

Their sin. Their need of righteousness. And judgment. The Holy Spirit. Speaks to your heart. Your conscience.

Your mind. And mine. He. He pricks our conscience. He highlights through God's word. Or through the preaching. Something that is wrong. In our lives. He flashes it up.

He makes it. Uncomfortable. Or whatever it may be. But we know. That we know. That we know. Yeah. I'm not right with God. I know this has to be dealt with. And I know that it's something. That I can't continue.

[31 : 45] To live with. Confessing our sin. The trouble is of course. Is that. If we continue to suppress. God speaking to us. In our conscience.

Then there will come a point. Where we will no longer hear. We continue to. Reject. The work of the Holy Spirit. In our lives. There will come a point. When we. His voice will not be heard.

And we will be in such. Awful danger. That there will be no way. Back. Confessing your sins. The beginning. Dear friends.

Not general. Not just some waffle. That says. Oh yeah. I'm really bad. And I'm sorry. But from the heart. Says. Lord. I know. I know.

That this is. Wrong. And I don't want to be like this anymore. But it's more than that. It's not just about saying. Sorry. If I can put it that way. But also. It's confessing our sin.

[32 : 40] And also being conscious. Of who God is. Being conscious. Of who God is. When the people confess their sin. Samuel says to them. Don't be afraid. Rather.

He says. For the sake of his great name. God's name. Verse 22. The Lord will not reject his people. Because the Lord is pleased to make you his own. They are to be aware of the fact that God is both gracious.

And he is angry. He is merciful. And he is just. So there's his mercy. Don't be afraid. He's not going to give up on you.

But rather. He says at the very end. Yet. Verse 25. If you persist in doing evil. Both you and your king will perish. God will forgive your sin.

Though he is a just God. How? How can God forgive your sin and mine? How can he set us free? Well. Because of his faithfulness. To his promises. The test.

[33 : 43] The Bible's word is covenant. It's an agreement that God has made. Which he keeps his side of the bargain. So verse 22 says. For the sake of his great name. The Lord will not reject his people.

Because the Lord was pleased to make you his own. Throughout the history of the Old Testament. God had made covenant promises. To the descendants of Abraham. If they follow him and trust in him. He will bless them and be their God.

God has made promises again and again. Throughout the Bible. Forgiving us. Because Jesus came. To die on the cross for our sins. A covenant. An agreement.

A promise. God can forgive us. Because. He has made provision for forgiveness for us. But then why must I bring my sin for forgiveness?

Why can't God forgive me freely? Why can't God just let me off the hook? Why can't God just give me. Give me a pardon as it were. Without me having to do anything. Without anything having to be done. Well because God hates sin.

[34 : 42] We have to bring our sin to God. So that he can deal with it. Because it is so hateful to him. It's so obnoxious to him. So awful to him. God is gracious.

God is just. They are. Both true of God. Like two heads on a coin. The coin is not only heads and tails. Sorry.

Not only heads. And not only tails. It is. One and the same. Both heads and tails. God at the same time is both gracious. And he is just. Gracious in forgiving our sins.

Just in punishing sin. Punishing our sin. At the cross of Jesus Christ. If we forget that God is gracious. If we don't. If we come to God.

And don't seem as gracious. Then we'll lose all hope. We'll be overwhelmed. With the condemnation of our sin. As the people were there. They were afraid. Someone says. Don't be afraid. Why? Because God is gracious.

[35 : 37] But if we forget that God is justice. If we forget that God is angry with sin. If we forget that God. Is someone who sees sin as awful. And terrible. And hates it. With the very core of his being. Then we shall.

Dear friends. Never seek to be rescued from sin. We'll just continue as we are. Thinking that God will just. Brush it under the carpet. All the time. And we'll fail to realize. That we need to be saved. From the consequences. Of our sin. We shall persist. In our sin. And ultimately find ourselves. Swept away.

And destroyed. So one final thing. We need to confess our sin. We need to be conscious. Of who God is. We need to be committed.

To obedience. Committed to obedience. Samuel says to them. Do not be afraid. Verse 20. You have done all this evil.

[36 : 32] Yet do not turn away. From the Lord. But serve the Lord. With all your hearts. Verse 24. Be sure to fear the Lord. And serve him faithfully.

With all your hearts. This is the best way. To prevent ourselves. From falling into sin. This is the best way. To not only get out.

Of a sinful fix. In which we found ourselves. Turning to God. But it's the best way. For us to continue. Walking with the Lord. Day by day. Knowing his blessing. Keeping away from those traps. It's serving him. Faithfully. Fully. Wholeheartedly. Because he always knows. What's best for us.

And his will is always. What's good for us. See Samuel knew. What the people were like.

He knew the human heart. It's like your heart and mine. It's a yo-yo. At times. One minute we're up. And one minute God is great. One minute we're serving him. And loving him. Next minute something catches our eye.

[37 : 28] And we're off this way. And we're down again. Spiritually. That was always their problem. Almost as soon as God. Would restore them to himself. They went their own way.

You see when you become a Christian. You don't suddenly become a perfect person. You don't suddenly become sinless in every way. You don't suddenly become somebody who sort of walks on air. With no problems or difficulties or troubles.

You're not somebody whose heart is so transformed and changed. That you never ever want to sin again. We still carry around the old sinful nature. Yes we're new creations. Yes we've been saved. Yes we've been brought out of Satan's snare and dominion. Into the kingdom of God. But every day we have battles with sin and temptation. The devil is always still at work. Looking to trip us up.

To catch us out. To ensnare us. In useless idols. Notice that's what God has to say through Samuel here. Don't. Verse 21.

[38 : 25] Turn away after useless idols. They can do you no good. Nor can they rescue you. Because they are useless. You may say.

Well I haven't got any statues in my house. I haven't got any. Buddhas. Or any Hindu gods. Or even any statues of Jesus. Or Mary. Whoever it may be. So surely this is nothing to say to me.

No. Useless idols are anything that diverts us from living for Christ. Anything that gets in the way. In our relationship with God. It can be money. It can be family.

It can be work. It can be our holidays. It can be ourself. It can be our hobbies. It can be any number of things. And they are those things that we live for. But they're useless.

There's nothing wrong with any of them in one sense. Except when they take the place of Christ.

When they become more important than him. Why is that a problem?

[39 : 23] Well because. Dear friends. The reality is this. Without Christ we're lost. We're hell bound. All the money in the world. All the holidays in the world. All the family. All the friends. All the career.

Everything else. When it comes down to it. It can do nothing to rescue us from our sin. It can do nothing to make us right with God. It can do nothing to save us from hell. And if we love those things.

And put those things first. And we neglect our own souls. Then ultimately we are. Downright stupid. David. But the truth is.

We can often feel those things begin to tighten around about us. And let me ask you this. Let me challenge you with this. When you begin to feel those temptations drawing you away from Christ. Whatever you do. Run to him. Run to him. Call to him. Cry out to him. See Christ came into this world with one goal.

[40 : 18] With one purpose. He came to set us free from sin. And bring us into the liberty and freedom. Which is what it is to be a child of God. Peter. Sorry. Paul writes to the Christians in Galatia.

Who were in the point of being dragged away. He says it is for freedom that Christ has set you free. Stand firm then. And don't let yourselves be caught up.

Entangled. Once more. In slavery. Christian life is the way of freedom. But it begins with recognising the problem that we're in.

Let's pray together shall we. none of us like being told we're sinners Lord none of us like having your finger pressed upon that sore point in our conscience in our lives we find it uncomfortable like a doctor checking the wound pressing does it hurt here well the truth is Lord it does hurt here because all of us who have been awakened by your spirit are conscious of our sin and conscious oh Lord that we are not the people we should be we've not lived, said, thought, acted in the way which Lord ultimately is what's good and right and Lord for our best and for that of others we see the consequences in our lives we see it in our families we see it in our relationships we see it in our walk with you

Lord we thank you that you have provided for us wonderful forgiveness and not just forgiveness but you've provided for us a way out a way into the daylight a way of liberty a way of freedom that we do not need to stay under the impending doom of our own self-destruction but that Lord we can be free I do want to pray Lord for those here this morning who've never known that freedom who are still trapped in what they think is the freedom of pleasing themselves of doing what they want living their lives as they see fit Lord I ask that you would send your spirit upon their hearts and bring that conviction that conviction that shows them just what terrible danger they're in and yet the way out is through Christ I pray that you would give them the courage the boldness the power the faith the repentance not to stay sat in the darkness and in the gloom of what they think is freedom but is in fact the dungeon and bring them into the freedom and the liberty Lord that you have provided when you paid for their sin on the cross oh Lord bring them out into the daylight the warmth of your son and the smile of your face oh Lord bring them out

[43 : 18] I pray and I ask for those of us here who know what it is to struggle with sin and perhaps some of us here particularly have found ourselves wrapped up in a particular sin it's called hold we've given it room and now we know that it's like that ferret bite we can't seem to shake it off it may be an attitude it may be an unforgiveness of someone else it may be a way of doing things Lord which we just know we shouldn't a relationship whatever it may be we just let ourselves get into it and now we can't get out of it Lord I thank you that you are the one who sets free the captive pray that Lord you'd give us just that faith to cry to pray Lord deliver us from our sins deliver us Lord as

you promised if we confess our sins you're faithful and just not only to forgive us but to deliver us from all unrighteousness I pray Lord for those of us who are on the brink maybe we can see there's something calling calling us away from you maybe a work career relationship maybe maybe money maybe all sorts of things and it's calling us to just go a little bit away but Lord at the end we can't see that it's like a spider's web it's a trap

Lord please bring us back onto the right path keep us from going that way of harm grief and sadness to our own souls and dishonor to you Lord we are laid before you open before you thank you for your word which speaks so practically and so clearly into our lives and oh Lord by your spirit work in us all that is good and pleasing to your will and which is your great blessing for us for we ask it in Jesus name Amen Amen Now to him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his presence in glory without fault and with great joy to the only wise God our Saviour be glory majesty power and authority through Jesus Christ our Lord before all ages today and forevermore amen

Amen Amen Amen Amen