

引言 INTRODUCTION

No matter how our world may change, certain things never change. Let me prove it by playing a simple game with you. When I mention a product, please say the first brand-name that comes to your mind: hamburger, athletic shoes and coffee. Many of those brands have been around for decades because their names stand for good quality. What comes to mind when you think of God? You may say that He is a supernatural being with mighty power, He lives in heaven and He is holy and righteous. Those are correct answers. One attribute we will highlight in this message is God's faithfulness. His love toward us never changes, but so are His requirements for us. Since God is faithful to us, He expects us to be faithful to Him too. In our study last week, the Israelites got Saul as their new king. They expected their king to lead them to war. The story in chapter 11 proves that Saul was the type of king they hoped for. At that time, the Ammonites besieged a town called Jabesh Gilead. Saul gathered soldiers from all over Israel to join him in a battle when he heard the news. Eventually, they defeated the enemies. The Israelites met at Gilgal on their way back and reconfirmed Saul as their king. People were happy to have a king just like other nations had. God's will toward His people did not change even when they had a new leader. Samuel reiterated that point in a farewell speech as we come to chapter 12.

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 神的拯救 Deliverance by God

God proved to be faithful by delivering the Israelites over and over again. Samuel quotes three turning points in the history of the nation to support that. First, God delivered their ancestors from Egypt. Samuel says in verse 8: **“When Jacob went into Egypt, and the Egyptians oppressed them, then your fathers cried out to the Lord and the Lord sent Moses and Aaron, who brought your fathers out of Egypt and made them dwell in this place.”** The exodus account was a major step in God's plan. God fulfilled His promise to Abraham and brought the Israelites from Egypt to Canaan. From slaves, they became God's people. They turned from hopeless to hopeful. But they steered away from their faith afterward when they forgot God's deliverance. We should always remember God's salvation, lest we may take His grace for granted. When is the last time you thank God for saving you? Let gratitude to God be our attitude. Do not be thankless like the Israelites. God was gracious to them despite their rebellion. The second example of God's deliverance is the calling of judges. Read **verse 9-11**. It is unthinkable for the Israelites to forget their God soon after they settled in Canaan. As a result, they followed the native people and worshipped idols. God used threats from enemies as a means to discipline His people. Hazor and the Philistines were places in Canaan, whereas Moab was a foreign nation nearby. God was patient and merciful toward His people. He raised up judges to deliver them. Judges served as military generals who led people to battles. But the Israelites rebelled against God soon after they returned to peace.

Samuel said in verse 9 that God sold His people to the hands of their enemies. It was as if the Israelites had gone back to Egypt as slaves. Sin enslaves us. Jesus tells us in John 8:34 that: "... everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin." People think that they can control sins. At the end, they are controlled by sins. We are never free in our spirit. We either embrace God and walk freely as His children or being held in bondage by sin. Do not wait till you are desperate like the Israelites before crying out to God for help. Lean on Him when you face temptation and He will deliver you. Samuel included himself in the judges in verse 11. He was the last judge and also the first prophet of his people. The third example of God's deliverance was about Samuel himself. He testifies in verse 3: "Here I am; testify against me before the Lord and before his anointed. Whose ox have I taken? Or whose donkey have I taken? Or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed? Or from whose hand have I taken a bribe to blind my eyes with it? Testify against me and I will restore it to you." God delivered the Israelites through the intercession of Samuel. In chapter 7, the Philistines attacked God's people at Mizpah. Samuel presented a burnt offering and called onto God. The Lord helped the Israelites defeat their enemies. They enjoyed a period of peace throughout the lifetime of Samuel. People knew Samuel since a child. He had never taken advantage of anyone, nor had he received a bribe and twisted justice. The noble character of Samuel was a stark contrast to the conduct of the future king. Their king would order people to serve him. He would also take the best farmland, crops and herds from them. It makes a huge difference whether a leader sees his position as an opportunity to serve others or deprive people. Take heed if you are a leader at work, at home or in the church. People only see the surface but God knows your hearts. Ultimately, you will give an account to the Lord in eternity. He will reward His good and faithful servants.

2. 罪人的背逆 Disobedience of Men

God demonstrated His faithfulness by delivering His people. However, the Israelites kept acting in disobedience. Their current request for a king is another evidence of their disobedience. God assured Samuel in 8:8 that His people had never changed: "According to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you." They wanted a king not because they were against Samuel, but they were against God. They were tired of God's leadership. Now they put their hope in a person. People always believe in someone or something. There is no real atheist in the world. People are either followers of the one true God or worshippers of idols. They may bow down to false gods in a temple. They may chase after some philosophical ideas, wishing to elevate their consciousness to the next level. They may believe in fate, or they put their trust in money, power and themselves. People have to come to a point when they realize that their idols cannot save them. Then they will start looking for the true God. Christians will go through the same process too. God can use difficulties to humble us and calls us back to Him. He disciplines those whom He loves. We often suffer from spiritual amnesia like the Israelites did. They forgot how God delivered them in the past. Samuel pointed out the reason for asking for a king in verse 12: "And when you saw that Nahash the king of the Ammonites came against you, you said to me, 'No, but a king shall reign over us,' when the Lord your God was your king." They looked for help in a

man when enemies drew near. They might think that a person was easy to negotiate with, unlike God who is always strict. They wanted an instant solution from a human king, rather than waiting for God to answer their prayers. Needless to say, modern people are often impatient like them. The Bible says God sees a thousand years like a day. When we ask God for something, He may tell us: “Just a second.” We will be on the edge. There are many Scriptural passages that remind us to wait on the Lord. For example, Psalm 27:14 says: **Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!** Trusting God includes trusting in His timing. We are often mindful about our own business. But God’s work covers the whole human history. Noah waited 100 years before the flood came. The Israelites were slaves in Egypt for 430 years before God rescued them. But this time they did not want to wait. God used a sign to convict His people. Look at verse 17: **“Is it not wheat harvest today? I will call upon the Lord, that he may send thunder and rain. And you shall know and see that your wickedness is great, which you have done in the sight of the Lord, in asking for yourselves a king.”** God saw calling for a king as an act of disobedience and wickedness. Wheat harvest takes place in May and June. Rain is rare during that period of the year. A storm will damage the crops. The passage says God sent rain on the same day. It clearly showed God’s disapproval of His people in asking for a king. Their economic loss in the harvest symbolized future harm caused by kings. God may send us a warning signal too when we sin. Perhaps it is a health, financial or relational crisis. It may happen out of the blue when everything is going smoothly. We think we can hold onto our idols with one hand and hold onto God with another hand. The signal functions like a weather forecast of an incoming storm. The wisest response is to turn back to God, confess our sin and ask for His forgiveness before it is too late.

3. 選擇的差異 Difference in Choice

Samuel recalled the deliverance by God and pointed out the disobedience of men. While God’s people could not change the past, they could somewhat control their future. Whether or not to listen to God would lead to different outcomes. Samuel urges his people in verse 14-15: **14 “If you will fear the Lord and serve him and obey his voice and not rebel against the commandment of the Lord, and if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the Lord your God, it will be well. 15 But if you will 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 and your king.”** Samuel advised his people to do four things in verse 14. First, they must fear the Lord. In the Bible “fear” does not only mean afraid of someone. The focus is more on showing respect, just like parents expect children to respect them. Second is to serve God. We mentioned before that the word has a double meaning of labor and worship. People must bring glory to God both in a religious ceremony and in daily life. Third is obey. Samuel contrasted the word by adding do “not rebel.” Obey has to do with one’s attitude. The last word is follow. It pertains to actions. Obedience to God is verified by actions. Submission to God must flow from our hearts to the hands. We will be in trouble when we ignore His commands and take shortcuts. Sin can be defined as missing the target. An archer will not get full score unless an arrow hits the bullseye. Besides, sin can also be understood as using ways that God disapproves to fulfill a legitimate need. Robbing a bank to put food on the

table is a sin. Cheating in an exam to get a good grade violates God's holiness. Similarly, despising God's leadership and looking for men's leadership is a sin. Notice in verse 14 that Samuel included the king in his discussion. Both the leader and his people must obey God. The king must lead by example too. Therefore, Samuel added in verse 15 that if people disobeyed God, both them and their king would suffer. The Lord was faithful to bless, but He was also faithful to punish. Samuel repeated the same principle in verse 20-21 and 24-25. Let us focus on verse 20: ... **“Do not be afraid; you have done all this evil. Yet do not turn aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart.”** Samuel was not shy to stress that asking for a king was an evil thing in God's eyes. But God could salvage the situation even though people sinned. He can repair a broken relationship. He can forgive the most notorious sinners. However, we have to bear the consequences of our sins. Lost health may not be restored. Emotional scars will remain. Although we cannot change our past, God can give us a new beginning. Many years ago I visited a Christian drug rehab center. The brothers I met had overcome previous addiction. I can honestly tell you that I may not want to get near to those people if I see them on the street. They are muscular, and they have tattoos on their dark skin. But when you mingle with them, you can feel their joy, humility and child-like faith. God gave them a new life. Similarly, God can also redeem us no matter what past and current sins we commit. Why shoulder all your sins and guilt? Bring them to the Lord and He can make you clean again. Israel now had her king. God would continue to raise up prophets to help the kings. Samuel knew that he still had unfinished business. He says in verse 23: **“Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you, and I will instruct you in the good and the right way.”** Samuel and future prophets should continue to pray for their people and teach them God's Word. They would become spiritual advisors to kings. God would bless the kings and his people if they would choose to walk in His way. The choices we make today will shape our future. You may have a few copies of the Bible on the bookshelf. You can decide whether or not to read it. Even after you read it, you can follow or ignore God's instructions. There are various ways to spend your Friday evening and Sunday morning. You can choose whether or not to come to church meetings. In your every day life, you can walk with the Lord or you can go your own way. May the Lord help us listen to Him and make wise choices on all things.

結論 CONCLUSION

Since God is faithful to us, He expects us to be faithful to Him too. God stays faithful regardless of our performance. His grace endures forever. I learn more about God's grace after I became a father. At one time I bought a game console for my older son as a birthday gift. I hid it in a closet before the day arrived. For some reason, my son had a period of rebellion. That upset me quite a bit. An idea flashed on my mind that I could give him the gift right then. It would be a perfect teachable moment to him about God's grace. God blesses us even when we feel least deserved. Eventually, I asked God for more patience and love to treat my son. I waited till his birthday to present him the gift. In the process, I was reminded of God's faithfulness. He remains faithful even when we are faithless. His promises will never change.

轉變中的不變 Unchanged in Change

10/30/22

撒母耳記上 1 Samuel 12

引言 INTRODUCTION

無論我們的世界如何改變，有些事情從來沒有改變。讓我們來玩一個簡單的遊戲證明這一點。當我提到一個產品時，請說出你想到的第一個品牌：漢堡包、運動鞋和咖啡。有些牌子已經存在了幾十年，因為它們的名字代表優良的品質。那麼當你想到神之時會想到什麼？你可能說祂是超自然的主宰，祂有能力，祂住在天上，祂是聖潔公義的。那些都是正確答案。我們在這一篇文章中強調的一個屬性是神的信實。神對我們的愛從未改變，祂對我們的要求也不會改變。既然神對我們信實，祂也希望我們對祂信實。在我們上週的學習中，掃羅成為以色列人的新王。他們期望王帶領他們去打仗。第 11 章的故事證明掃羅是他們心目中的那種君王。那時，亞捫人圍攻一個名叫基列雅比的城市。掃羅聽到這個消息後，便從以色列各地召集士兵去抵抗敵人。結果他們打敗了敵人。以色列人在回程中在吉甲聚集，並再次確認掃羅為他們的王。人們很高興有一位王，就像其他國家一樣。雖然他們有了新的領袖，神對祂子民的旨意沒有改變。當我們來到第 12 章時，撒母耳在告別演說中重申了這一點。

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 神的拯救 Deliverance by God

神一次又一次地拯救以色列人，證明祂是信實的。撒母耳引用了國家歷史上的三個轉折點來支持這一點。首先，神將他們的祖先從埃及拯救出來。撒母耳在第 8 節說：「**從前雅各到了埃及，後來你們列祖呼求耶和華，耶和華就差遣摩西、亞倫領你們列祖出埃及，使他們在這地方居住。**」出埃及是神計劃中重要的一步。神實現了對亞伯拉罕的應許，將以色列人從埃及帶到迦南。他們從奴隸變成了神的子民。他們在絕望中得到盼望。但後來他們忘記了神的拯救，甚至離開了他們的信仰。我們應該永遠記住神的救恩，免得我們把祂的恩典看為理所當然。你上一次感謝神拯救你是什麼時候？讓我們常常記得感謝神，不要像以色列人那樣忘恩負義。雖然他們不順服，神仍是恩待他們。神拯救的第二個例子是士師的設立。請看**第 9-11 節**。以色列人在迦南定居後不久就忘記了他們的神，這是難以想像的。於是，他們跟隨當地人敬拜偶像。神使用敵人的威脅作為管教祂子民的方式。夏瑣和非利士人都是在迦南地，而摩押是附近的國家。神對祂的子民充滿忍耐和憐憫。他興起士師來拯救他們。士師擔任軍事指揮官，帶領人民參加戰爭。但以色列人在恢復太平後不久又再次背叛神。撒母耳在第 9 節說，神將祂的子民「付與」敵人，原文是「賣」。彷彿以色列人回

到埃及再次成為奴隸。罪綑綁我們。耶穌在約翰福音 8:34 告訴我們：「… 所有犯罪的就是罪的奴僕。」人們以為他們可以控制罪。最後，他們被罪所控制。我們的靈從來都不是自由的。我們要不然接受神，成為祂自由的兒女，要不然被罪束縛。不要等到你像以色列人一樣絕望時才向神呼求。當你面對試探時要依靠神，祂會拯救你。撒母耳在第 11 節將自己列入了士師。他是最後一位士師，也是百姓的第一位先知。神拯救的第三個例子是關於撒母耳本人。他在第 3 節作見證：「我在這裏，你們要在耶和華和他的受膏者面前給我作見證。我奪過誰的牛，搶過誰的驢，欺負過誰，虐待過誰，從誰手裏受過賄賂因而眼瞎呢？若有，我必償還。」神藉著撒母耳的代求拯救了以色列人。在第 7 章，非利士人在米斯巴攻擊神的子民。撒母耳獻上燔祭，求告神。主幫助以色列人打敗了他們的敵人。在撒母耳的一生中，他們享受了一段太平時期。他們從撒母耳小時候就認識他。他從來沒有佔過任何人的便宜，也沒有受過賄賂和歪曲正直。撒母耳高尚的品格與未來君王的行為形成鮮明對比。他們的王會命令人民為他服務。他還會從他們拿走最好的農田、莊稼和牲畜。領袖是否將他的職位視為服務他人或剝削他人的機會，會產生巨大的差異。如果你在工作、家庭或教會中當領袖，請注意。人們只看到表面，但神知道你的心。最終，你要在永恆中向主交賬。祂會獎賞那些良善又忠心的僕人。

2. 罪人的背逆 Disobedience of Men

神通過拯救祂的子民來顯明祂的信實。然而，以色列人一直都背逆神。他們這一次要求立王是他們背逆的另一個證明。神在 8:8 節向撒母耳保證，祂的子民從來沒有改變：「自從我領他們出埃及到如今，他們常常離棄我，事奉別神。現在他們向你所行的，是照他們素來所行的。」他們想要一個王，不是因為他們反對撒母耳，他們乃是反對神。他們厭倦了神的帶領，現在他們想要把希望寄託在一個人身上。人們總是會崇拜某些東西。世界上沒有真正的無神論者。人們要不然跟隨獨一的真神，要不然敬拜偶像。他們可能去寺廟向假神鞠躬。他們可能會相信一些哲學思想，希望將自己的意識提升到另一個層次。他們可能相信命運，也可能相信金錢、權力和自己。當人們意識到他們的偶像無法拯救他們時，才會尋找真神。基督徒也會經歷類似的過程。神可以使用困難來謙卑我們，並呼召我們回到祂身邊。神必然會管教祂所愛的人。我們經常像以色列人一樣患有屬靈健忘症。他們忘記了神過去是如何拯救他們的。撒母耳在第 12 節指出他們求王的原因：「你們見亞捫人的王拿轄來攻擊你們，就對我說：『我們定要一個王治理我們。』其實耶和華—你們的神是你們的王。」當敵人靠近時，他們打算向一個人尋求幫助。他們可能以為跟一個人比較容易談判，不像神從來不會妥協的。他們以為一個人會給他們立時的解決方案，而不像等待神回應他們的禱告。很明顯，現代人往往像他們一樣不耐煩。聖經說神看千

年如一日。當我們向神祈求某些事時，祂可能會告訴我們：「請稍等。」我們便會坐立不安。有許多經文提醒我們要等候主。例如，詩篇 27:14 說：**要等候耶和華！當壯膽，堅固你的心！我再說，要等候耶和華！**相信神包括相信祂的時機。我們經常只關心自己的需要，但神是神的作為涉及整個人類歷史。挪亞等了 100 年，洪水才來到。以色列人在埃及被奴役了 430 年，神才拯救他們。但這一次，他們不想再等了。神用一個神蹟來使祂的子民知罪。請看第 17 節：**「這不是割麥子的時候嗎？我求告耶和華，他必打雷降雨，使你們又知道又看出，你們求立王的事是在耶和華面前犯大罪了。」**神要使他們知道要求立王是不順服和敗壞的事情。小麥的收割是在 5 月和 6 月，一年中的那個時候很少下雨。暴風雨會破壞莊稼。經文說神在同一天降雨，這清楚地表明神不贊成祂的子民立王。他們在收割中的經濟損失象徵著未來君王帶來的傷害。當我們犯罪時，神也可能會向我們發出警告信號。也許這是一次健康、財務或人際關係危機。它可能會在一切事情順利時突然發生。我們以為我們可以用一隻手抓住我們的偶像，用另一隻手抓住神。那個信號的功用就像風暴的天氣預告。最明智的反應是轉向神，承認我們的罪，趁早請求祂的饒恕。

3. 選擇的差異 Difference in Choice

撒母耳回顧神的拯救，並指出人的背逆。雖然神的子民無法改變過去，但他們可以在一定程度上掌握自己的未來。是否選擇聽從神會導致不同的結果。撒母耳在第 14-15 節敦促他的子民：**14 「你們若敬畏耶和華，事奉他，聽從他的話，不違背他的命令，你們和治理你們的王也都順從耶和華－你們的神就好了。15 倘若不聽從耶和華的話，違背他的命令，耶和華的手必攻擊你們，像從前攻擊你們列祖一樣。」**撒母耳在第 14 節建議他的百姓做四件事。第一，他們必須敬畏耶和華。在聖經中，「敬畏」不單是指害怕。重點是表現出尊敬，就像父母希望孩子尊重他們一樣。第二是事奉神。我們之前提過，「事奉」這個字有勞動和敬拜的雙重含義。人們必須在宗教儀式和日常生活中將榮耀歸給神。第三是聽從。撒母耳用「不違背」來強調其反面意思。聽從是關乎一個人的態度。最後一個字是順從。它與行動有關。對神的順服是通過行動來驗證的。對神的順服必須從我們的心進到我們的行為。當我們漠視神的命令而走捷徑時，我們就會碰到麻煩。罪可以定義為偏離目標。除非箭射中靶心，否則弓箭手不會獲得滿分。此外，罪也可以理解為使用神不認可的方式來滿足合理的需要。透過搶劫銀行來養家是罪。在考試中作弊以取得好成績也違背了神的聖潔。同樣地，藐視神的領導而尋求人的領導也是一種罪。請注意在第 14 節的指示中，撒母耳把王也包括在內。領袖和他的子民都必須順服神。王也必須以身作則。因此，撒母耳在第 15 節補充說，如果人們不服從神，他們和他們的王都會受苦。神的話信實不變，祂賞罰分明。撒母耳在 20-21 和 24-25 節重複了同樣

的原則。讓我們集中看第 20 節：...「不要懼怕！你們雖然行了這惡，卻不要偏離耶和華，只要盡心事奉他。」撒母耳毫不掩飾地強調，在神眼中，求王是一件邪惡的事。但縱使人犯了罪，神也能挽回那個局面。祂可以修復破裂的關係。祂可以原諒最嚴重的罪人。然而，我們必須承擔我們的罪的後果。失去的健康可能無法恢復，情感的傷害會留下疤痕。雖然我們無法改變我們的過去，但神可以給我們一個新的開始。許多年前，我參觀了一家基督徒戒毒中心。我在那裡碰到一些已經克服毒癮的弟兄。坦白說，如果我在街上看到他們，我可能不敢靠近他們。他們肌肉發達，古銅色的皮膚上有紋身。但當你與他們交談時，你會感受到他們的喜樂、謙卑和孩子般的信心。神給了他們新的生命。同樣地，無論我們過去和現在犯了什麼罪，神也可以救贖我們。為什麼要獨自承擔你所有的罪和內疚？把重擔帶到主面前，祂可以再次使你得潔淨。以色列現在有了她的王。神會繼續興起先知扶助君王。撒母耳知道他還有未完成的工作。他在第 23 節中說：「至於我，斷不停止為你們禱告，以致得罪耶和華。我必以善道正路指教你們。」撒母耳和將來的先知必須繼續為子民禱告並教導他們神的話語。他們也會成為王的屬靈顧問。如果王和他的子民選擇與神同行，祂就會祝福他們。我們今天所做的選擇也將會影響我們的未來。你的書架上可能有幾本聖經，你可以決定是否閱讀。讀完之後，你也可以遵行或忽略神的指示。你有不同的方式渡過週五晚上和週日早上。你可以選擇是否參加教會聚會。在你的日常生活中，你可以與主同行，也可以我行我素。求主幫助我們聽從祂的話，在凡事上做出明智的選擇。

結論 CONCLUSION

既然神對我們信實，祂也希望我們對祂信實。無論我們的表現如何，神都會保持信實。祂的恩典永遠長存。當我成為父親之後，我對神的恩典有更多的了解。有一次，我為大兒子買了一台遊戲機作為生日禮物。我把它藏在壁櫥裡。由於某些原因，我的兒子有一段叛逆時期，使我很苦惱。一個想法閃過我的腦海，我可以馬上把禮物送給他。這是一個教導他關於神恩典的黃金機會。即使我們覺得最不配，神也會祝福我們。結果，我祈求神賜給我更多的耐心和愛來對待我的兒子。最後我還是等到他的生日才給他禮物。在這個過程中，我更多體會到神的信實。就算我們失信，神仍然保持信實。祂的應許永不改變。