

Light On My Path



*Messages by various speakers mostly on the first book
of Samuel at the Streetlight Mission Church
in the 6:30 p.m. services of June 2007*

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Pastor Paul Aasman

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1 Samuel 12:22 “For the sake of his great name the LORD will not reject his people, because the LORD was pleased to make you his own.”

Why Does God Love Us?

Reading: 1 Samuel 12
Text: 1 Samuel 12:22

Jesus told a famous parable about two people, each built a house. On the outside the houses looked the same. But one was very weak, and the other strong. One was weak because it was built on sand. The other was on rock. The parable is about the wise man and the foolish man, but it applies to the church too. There are many churches in Hamilton. Some are built on sand, others on rock. It is up to you to choose which church should you worship in. Which one do you think is built on rock? In which will you seek refuge for the day of disaster?

For that is what our text is about. Samuel sees that the church for which he struggled so much and for which he worked so hard, was in danger of drifting from the foundation of rock and to be rebuilt on a foundation of sand. The church that is not always reforming cannot remain reformed or true to God’s word. Sometimes we think that the church we should seek out is the one that is happy, where everyone hugs each other and is excited to get

together. That might be good enough for you, but it is not good enough for God.

You see, in our passage, the people are very excited to get together. They have asked for a king and they have gotten one. Saul is now their king. He is not only tall and handsome, having the outward gifts of leadership, but he has proven to be a good leader. Last week we had seen how Saul had delivered Jabesh Gilead from Nahash the butcher, or Nahash the Ammonite. So everyone gets together and celebrated the victory and the future of Israel under their new king, Saul. At a place called Gilgal, they reaffirmed the kingship of Saul in the presence of Yahweh in 1 Samuel 11:15 – *“So all the people went to Gilgal and confirmed Saul as 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.”*

Yes, God is good to us. God has blessed us. The future is bright. He has given us a good king. To us belongs the future. So why is Samuel so down on the people of Israel? Why isn't he proposing a toast to the future? Why is he taking away all their fun? Lets have a look at Samuel's speech.

He begins by asking the people if he had ever done them wrong while he was their leader in 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, I will make it right.” He does that because his term as their leader is over. Saul is now their king. Samuel will still be there, but his duties will be much smaller. Saul will lead the people. So Samuel want to be clear about the work he did in Israel: Let it be known that my work was done honestly.

Then Samuel reviews Israel's history. It is not a very nice review. In verse 8 he shows that God delivered the Hebrew people when they cried out to God from Egypt. God sent rescuers and delivered them from pitiful slavery. But (verse 9) they forgot God, so God made them suffer, and they remembered God and cried out to him again, and confessed that they had sinned against God. So God sent more deliverers, the last being Samuel himself (verse 11).

Samuel's point is not too hard to see. Although God has now appointed a king over Israel, God still holds all power and he still rules. They must obey their king, but more important still: They must obey their God. And to press the point, God did something out of the ordinary as described in verse 18 – *“Then Samuel called upon 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.”* The king cannot command rain to fall. The gods of Ammon or Philistia cannot command rain to fall. God is king over

all the earth and there is no other. He alone can command the thunder and rain.

But there is another point Samuel is making. The people need to understand, and never forget, that things are good for them right now because God is merciful to them.

This is the point of our text. Does God love us because we are good people? Because we are faithful to him? Because we are better than other people? Because we have chosen him? Because I responded to an altar call?

If you think like that, then you are building on sand. What will happen in times of trouble? What will happen when you get angry, when you fall into temptation, when you don't act anymore out of faith? The foundation for your relationship with God washes out beneath you. You will see that you have built your salvation on sand. If my relationship with God depends on me, on my commitment to him, on my faithfulness or on my decision to believe in Jesus, then my salvation is built on sand, because we all are by nature like shifting sand. Samuel warns Israel that they often failed to be loyal to God.

So why did God want to keep ruling over the people of Israel? Indeed, why does he now want to be king over you and me? Why does he want to rule over the Streetlight Church? Why does he stick with us? For the sake of his great name, he is pleased to make us his own. It is his work for us and his gift to us.

Jesus Christ helps us to understand this even more clearly. For the sake of his great name, God has sent his Son Jesus Christ into the world because we were completely helpless to do anything for ourselves. He could have rejected us because of our sins against him, but instead of rejecting us, he sent his Son to save us. Not for our sake, but for his sake. There is cause of songs and thanksgiving: God has acted for the glory of his name and in doing so he gives us life, hope, joy and glory.

Learn anew and again to put all your trust in God. Do not trust in your own commitment. Build yourself on the rock of God's love in Jesus Christ, on the God who saves us for the sake of his name. Build yourself on that rock and in that church so that we might together celebrate the victory of our great King, Jesus Christ.

June 10, 2007
Pastor Paul Aasman

1 Samuel 13:14 “But now your kingdom will not endure; the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people, because you have not kept the LORD's command.”

The King whom God Desires

Reading: 1 Samuel 13:1-15

Text: 1 Samuel 13:14

Do you sometimes feel like you live on the edge of survival? If you are sick, who will look after you? If someone

attacks you who will protect you? If ODSP one month would be cut in half, how would you survive?

Israel felt that way too. Nahash the Butcher from Amon was terrorizing the Israelite towns on the Eastern territories. Moms and dads slept with weapons beside the bed and an escape plan in mind. Children feared the night when terrors sweep down from the brooding hills. It happened to Jabesh Gilead! The Ammonites swept down on that town and was ready to kill many of the people. But Saul the King called his troops together and marched to the rescue! Hurray for Saul! Saul saved the people of that town. So the people began to feel a little safer. Saul was their protector. It makes us happy to read this. We all should live under such protection, to see peace and security.

Now we come to chapter 13. Saul had a son, Jonathan who, like his father, was a valiant soldier and a leader of men. Saul had an army of 3000. He kept 2000 for himself at Micmash, and gave 1000 to his son Jonathan in Gibeah. Saul was doing his own thing with his 2000, but Jonathan wanted to do something with his 1000 - Israel was in danger and he felt the need to fight for his people. So he attacked a Philistine garrison.

Well, that was like poking a stick into a beehive! You might kill a few bees, but all the rest of them make a straight line for you to kill you if they can! The Philistines gather together 3000 chariots, 6000 charioteers and more foot soldiers than could

be counted. Jonathan had done something and now his dad, Saul the King, must act. Perhaps he will be destroyed! How can he fight against so many soldiers with so few? What is more, the Philistines have the latest technology (lots of chariots, metal swords and spear tips) while the Israelites have only wooden sticks and not even horses!

So what does Saul do? He does the right thing. He goes to God to ask for his blessing so that he might defend God's people. He calls together all Israel's soldiers and summons them to Gilgal where the altar of God is. He also asks Samuel to come to offer the sacrifice and to lay God's blessing on the soldiers. The soldiers must know that they are fighting God's battle and they win by God's strength so that they might give honour and glory to God.

Saul arrives at Gilgal and soon all the soldiers are there too. There are many 1000's of Israelite soldiers. They are not very brave. They know who the enemy is and how strong the Philistines are. But perhaps they will get courage from God. So they wait for Samuel to show up to give them the blessing. But a whole day passes - Samuel does not show up. Another day passes, still no Samuel. Another and another - until seven days have passed and still Samuel does not show up. By now, the troops are so afraid that most of them have fled and hidden themselves. Saul is at his wits end. So he thinks, "If Samuel does not show up by tomorrow morning, I'll offer the sacrifice myself." Samuel did not

show up the next morning either, so Saul offered the sacrifice himself and blessed the troops himself.

But that was not Saul's job. He knows that. He is not a mediator of God's blessing. Only a prophet can bring a message from God. Only a priest can lay God's blessing on his people. Only a king can raise a sword to defend God's people. Saul was not allowed to offer a sacrifice or give a blessing.

What should he have done instead?

He should have waited for Samuel. He should have waited. That is something that David learned which we can see numerous times in the Psalms. For instance, we read

*In the morning, O LORD, you hear my voice;
in the morning I lay my requests before you
and wait in expectation. (Ps 5:3)*

Or Psalm 37:7, *“Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him.”* And later in this same Psalm, *“Wait for the Lord and keep his way”* (vs 34). And in the next Psalm we read, *“I wait for you, O Lord; you will answer, O Lord my God.”*(38:15)

But Saul did not wait. Saul thought that he was wiser than God, that God's laws could be ignored whenever it suited him. Don't ever think that, my friends. You cannot trample on God's law when it's convenient for you. You need to obey him and wait for him. God always shows that obedience is the best policy.

Saul did not understand that. Saul proved that he was not a good king. He can do good things, but he will cause more trouble in Israel than good. So God did not abandon his people to king Saul. He replaced Saul with another king.

And do you know who that other king is?

Yes, David. But did David always obey God?

No, he did not. He sometimes broke God's law in terrible ways. But David was different than Saul. David was sorry for breaking God's law and tried to change his behaviour. That is what repentance means - to not only be sorry but to change the way you live. David did that because David loved God. Yet, when David broke God's law, he brought much suffering to Israel. He was a better king, but not really a good king. He was a sinner who sometimes was unfair, sometimes brutal and violent, sometimes selfish and oppressive. Think about Bathsheba: She was happily married to Uriah, but the king took her and killed her husband. Even with David as king, people's lives could fall apart and disaster loomed.

But we have a good king. Who is our king?

It is Jesus Christ. He has beaten back the forces of chaos and totally defeated them. He obeyed God's law, and he did it perfectly, even when it was very hard to do so. Nothing can resist him now. He is our king and he rules over all the forces in our lives. He is taking care of us. Maybe it does not seem that way.

You might feel very vulnerable. But Jesus will never let you fall out of his love or lose your heavenly inheritance.

You may suffer loss in your life, feel very weak and vulnerable, dependant on powers that are not very friendly, experience pain from diseases or even from violence done against you, but you need to learn to wait for God's goodness. Jesus Christ is coming. He loves you. His hands are lifted up to bless you. He will take you up in glory. He will support you in this world. Wait for the Lord Jesus. When he comes, when he shows to you his face, you will see that it was worth the wait.

June 17, 2007
Pastor George vanPopta

1 Peter 2:11-12 “Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.”

Live Good Lives

Reading: 1 Peter 3:8-18a
Text: 1 Peter 2:11-12

Good evening, everyone!

I want to begin by addressing you with the same words that Peter starts these sentences with, and those words are “Dear friends.” It was Peter, perhaps the best-known disciple of the Lord

Jesus Christ, who wrote this letter by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He was the one whom the Jesus called “a rock”, the one on whom he was going to build his church. Peter wrote this letter about 1900 years ago, to a group of Christians living in the area that we call Turkey today.

This letter was originally written in the Greek language, and translated into English so that we can understand it. But the words that are translated as “dear friends” can also be translated as “beloved”. When you hear the word “beloved” in the New Testament, it makes you think about what God the Father called his son when he was baptized. At Jesus’ baptism the voice of the heavenly Father was heard from heaven, saying, “*This is my beloved son.*” Here is the gospel already! The apostle Peter, in the name of God the Father, calls Christians by the same name as God the Father called his own son. He is telling those Christians that they are God’s beloved children, just as Jesus Christ is his beloved child. So if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, then you are a beloved child of God – someone whom God the Father loves!

Then Peter says in verse 11, “*I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world...*”. What are aliens and strangers? They are people who have moved from a faraway country to a new country. In 1951 my parents came from Holland to Canada, and until they got used to living here, they were “aliens and strangers.” Now Peter says that we Christians are “aliens and strangers.” Our

homeland is a different country, and that homeland is the kingdom of God. That's where we belong. So we Christians live here in Canada, but just like people who come from a different country speak a different language and have different customs, so we, belonging to the kingdom of God, are going to speak and act differently than the people around us. For example, Christians don't use foul language, they don't use the Lord's name in vain, and they use words to build others up rather than to tear them down. This is what Peter had in mind when he said that we are to live as "aliens and strangers in the world."

As Peter works this out, he says, "*I urge you... to abstain from sinful desires.*" In 1986 I quit smoking cigarettes. I had to abstain from tobacco. An alcoholic needs to abstain from alcohol. In a similar way, the apostle Peter says that we are "to abstain from sinful desires." Sinful desires are anything that goes against the will of God. If you come to the morning worship services here at Streetlight, then you hear the Ten Commandments. Abstaining from sin is living according to the Ten Commandments.

So why does Peter "urge" us? It is because those sinful desires "war against your soul." The actual meaning of the original Greek word is more that sin *strategizes* against you. Sin plans against you. It seeks out the weakest spot in your life, and that is where it shoots its bullets. By strategizing against you, sin

seeks to kill you. Sinful desires "war against your soul" because they want to put your soul to death.

Then Peter also says that we are to live good lives. A good life is a life in obedience to God and serving him according to his Ten Commandments. You must understand that you cannot do this in your own strength. You cannot save yourself by your obedience. The only way to be saved from sin is by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us on the cross. When a person believes in the Lord Jesus Christ and is saved from his sin, then the Holy Spirit begins to work in the life of that person. He renews that person's life and begins to make that person live a good and obedient life. Peter is saying that we are to live lives empowered by the Holy Spirit.

In verse 12 Peter says that we are to "*live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds...*" When you live an obedient life for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ, whether that is in your home, your community, or among your family members and friends, then some unbelievers will accuse you of doing wrong. They will scorn you. Peter says that even though some unbelievers will criticize us for following the Lord Jesus Christ, we are to keep it up. This is because "*though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.*" It is an amazing thing! As we live as Christians in the midst of a world,

which is hostile to God and his church, people will begin by criticizing us. But if we keep following the Lord Jesus Christ, then the Lord may be pleased to use us to change those people. They will see that we have devoted our lives to the Lord Jesus Christ and that we are living good lives, and then the Lord will use those things to bring about repentance in the lives of those people so that they, too, begin to glorify God.

In the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 5:16, the Lord Jesus Christ said, “*Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds praise your Father in heaven.*” When we live good lives, we are testimonies, showing what it means to belong to Christ. Then the Lord may use that to win others for himself. Our lives are like a sermon or an open book, proclaiming the gospel.

Peter ends with the words “*on the day he visits us,*” which refers to the time when the Lord Jesus Christ will visit the world for one last time. The word “visit” is something like coming for an inspection. It will be the Day of Judgment, when Jesus will separate those who believed in him and those who rejected him. On that day he will gather in all those who loved him like a shepherd gathers in his sheep. The heavenly Jerusalem is going to come down from heaven to earth and that is where Jesus will gather his own. Will you be there?

June 24, 2007
Pastor Paul Aasman

1 Samuel 14:2,3,6 “Saul was staying on the outskirts of Gibeah under a pomegranate tree in Migron. With him were about six hundred men, among whom was Ahijah, who was wearing an ephod. He was a son of Ichabod's brother Ahitub son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the LORD's priest in Shiloh. No one was aware that Jonathan had left. Jonathan said to his young armor-bearer, ‘Come, let's go over to the outpost of those uncircumcised fellows. Perhaps the LORD will act in our behalf. Nothing can hinder the LORD from saving, whether by many or by few.’”

Learning When to Act and When to Wait

Reading: 1 Samuel 14:2,3,6
Message: 1 Samuel 14:1-23

Satan has one basic strategy for world domination: To separate faith and action. It is a powerful one. It expresses itself in one of two ways. On the one hand, there are people who claim to be Christians, who go to church, sing songs, give money for an offering - but they don't act like Christians at all during the week. They are called hypocrites. They are not what they claim to be. That is one way that Satan gets people to separate faith from action.

On the other hand, there are those who seem to be very strict about their Christianity - they are law and order Christians, like the Pharisees in Jesus' day. They act like Christians, but they do not love God, and therefore, they do not act out of faith - that is,

they do not depend on God's grace and strength. Again, faith is separated from action because they act, but not out of faith. They act out of their own inner strength and for their own glory.

What we need to do is to be people who worship God with all our hearts on Sunday, in the worship services, and then go out and keep on singing, giving and worshipping God in our lives, putting our faith into action, living day by day out of God's power and strength, living for his glory.

In our passage, Saul does not show his faith by his actions. Something terrible is happening in our passage. The Philistines, the heathen nation on Israel's western boarder, is trying to destroy Israel, and it looks like they will do it. The Philistines have metal weapons, Israel has none; Philistines have 1000's of chariots, horses and charioteers, Israel has none; Philistines have foot soldiers beyond counting, Saul has only about 600 left.

There is a Philistine military post deep in Israelite territory. From this fort, Philistines soldiers will go out on raids on Israelite towns and villages. They will drive away livestock, they will steal grain harvests, pressed oil and wine; they will destroy barns and houses; they will kill men and rape women. It is the way of nations, the way of sinful human beings.

So what does Saul do? We read in verse 2: "*Saul was staying on the outskirts of Gibeah under a pomegranate tree in Migron.*" What is Saul doing? Nothing. Why does Saul do

nothing? That is a hard one to answer. Remember what happened when Nashon the Ammonite attacked Jabesh Gilead? Saul leaped to action, summoned Israel's army together and they gathered in great numbers, and though the Ammonites outnumbered Israel, yet Israel won a great victory. Because with God, numbers matter naught.

So why was Saul doing nothing now? Does he not believe that with God he shall win? Did God not say that if they loved and obeyed him, then "*You will pursue your enemies, and they will fall by the sword before you. Five of you will chase a hundred, and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand, and your enemies will fall by the sword before you*" (Lev 26:7,8)?

But what future is there for a beggar who is afraid to beg? What will become of a carpenter who is afraid to hit a nail with his hammer, or saw a board in two? What is a king who is afraid to fight? What is a Christian who is afraid to speak to his neighbour for Jesus Christ, or fails to love those in need of his care, or no longer prays to his God?

Saul claimed to have faith but when he needed to act out of faith, he sat down under a pomegranate tree surrounded by his 600 soldiers. But Jonathan was made of different stuff. What a story! With an army of 2, he advanced against that Philistine outpost, just he and his armour bearer. An armour bearer is not just someone

who carries a soldiers' armour. He is a teacher, encourager and fellow soldier.

Jonathan said to his armour bearer in verse 6, *“Come, let's go over to the outpost of those uncircumcised fellows. Perhaps the LORD will act in our behalf. Nothing can hinder the LORD from saving, whether by many or by few.”* And his armour bearer replied, *“Do all that you have in mind... Go ahead; I am with you heart and soul.”*

These were men of faith. They dared to do great things because they believed God was with them. Nothing was too great for them to do, if God was with them. Paul says later on that, if God is for us, who can be against us? If you've got God on your side, there is no Goliath you cannot bring down, no power that can stand against you.

So they approached the fort and showed themselves. The Philistines saw them and challenged them to come and fight. That was the sign Jonathan wanted. A deep valley separated them, but they climbed down Seneh (a loose screened slope covered with briars, like razor wire) and climbed up Bozez (a sheer rock cliff). The Philistines did not expect Jonathan to climb up that way, so when they appeared in the middle of the camp, they were surprised. God made them mighty and they slew the enemy. When it was over, there lay 20 Philistines soldiers, dead in an area no bigger than the Streetlight property.

So we see that faith without deeds is dead, but faith that lives through deeds is powerful and cannot be stopped. Those who live by faith will see the power of God do great things through them. Jesus Christ lived by faith, and he conquered the world! He overcame every power. Not even death, hell or Satan could resist him.

Do not let Satan gain victory again. He wants to separate faith and action. Don't let him. Renew your faith so that it might be the root of your entire life. And then live out of that renewed faith for God's glory.

