

1 Samuel 12:20-24.

²⁰ "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. ²¹ Do not turn away after useless idols. They can do you no good, nor can they rescue you, because they are useless. 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. ²³ 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 that is good and right. ²⁴ But be sure to fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart; consider what great things he has done for you.

Serve the LORD with all your heart.**1) See that the Lord is faithful****2) Consider the great things he has done for you.**

It wasn't really an election year like we know it, but it was a time of great transition. It appeared that power was being transferred from one party to another. The people of Israel had elected to get themselves a king. They looked at the nations around them. They looked at their structure and their power. They looked to men like the King of Ammon and his forces and his strength and this was the kind of power and security that they craved. And they would get what they had cried out for, Samuel would anoint Saul as the first king.

But before Samuel faded from the forefront of Israel's leadership he was careful to point out what the Israelites already had and how it was far superior to anything that this world could ever offer. ***"It is the LORD who appointed Moses and Aaron and brought your forefathers up out of Egypt. ⁷ Now then, stand here, because I am going to confront you with evidence before the LORD as to all the righteous acts performed by the LORD for you and your fathers" (1 Samuel 12:6-7).*** Samuel recounted for the people how God delivered them from Egypt. He spoke of the blessings and the victories and the deliverance from their enemies that God generously and graciously handed to his people under the rule of the judges. God took care of them, provided them with safety and security; and how did the people thank the LORD? The people grumbled. They complained. They did evil in the eyes of the LORD as they turned themselves over to the false gods of their neighbors, and their latest public sin was that they asked for an earthly king. What an act of disrespect! What disturbing and sinful lack of trust in God that they would demand a mortal king when they lived so securely under the rule of the eternal God.

They would, however, get what they demanded, but not without a firm talking-to from the leader whom God had previously appointed. With stern instruction Samuel called both the people and the incoming king to follow and obey the LORD and warned them of the consequences that would come if they failed to do so. He even summoned the LORD to send thunder and rain to come during one of the driest parts of the year to show them the seriousness of all of this. Samuel announced to the people, ***"I will call upon 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 (1 Samuel 12:17)."*** And that same day the LORD sent thunder and rain and all the people stood in awe of the LORD and of Samuel. The people were afraid that God would strike

them down that very instant for their disobedience and their lack of faith and they asked Samuel to cry out to God for mercy. The words of our lesson for today are Samuel's response. ***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. ²¹ Do not turn away after useless idols. They can do you no good, nor can they rescue you, because they are useless (1 Samuel 12:20-21).***

We are certainly living in a different situation than those people of Israel. They were truly God's chosen nation. God had chosen this to be the people through whom he would bring the Savior. He had a specific plan for his people that is all detailed in the pages of Scripture, and therefore he ruled over them in a very unique and specific way. But God also tells all those who believe in him that he has chosen us and we are his people. And as his people he tells us that we are to fear, love, and trust in him above all things. However, much like those Old Testament people of Israel, we too are prone to display a lack of trust in God by putting an undue amount of trust in earthly things. The people of Israel had in essence made for themselves an idol in the image of king, and while we may not crave the rule of a king are we not in constant danger of putting our trust in the structure and power of our nation rather than trusting in God first and foremost? We must admit that this is a real temptation that we fall into as well. And so God speaks to us today through the words of Samuel. Calling us to careful inspection of our passion, of our love, of our trust. Our God instructs us through his Word to **Serve the LORD with all your heart. 1) See that the Lord is faithful 2) Consider the great things he has done for you.**

A Christian journalist named Jason Foster wrote an article in September of this year, in which he issued this striking statement. *"America has become an idol for many who profess to follow Jesus."* He went on to explain by saying, *"Don't misunderstand: There's nothing wrong with loving your country. But we should keep that love in check. Yes, we should want a strong country. Yes, we should be thankful for our rights. Yes, part of the biblical role of government is to restrain evil. But none of those should become the source of our security, nor should they be the things we value most. They shouldn't be the reasons we live as Christians. They shouldn't become our idols."* In his article he speaks at length about the political frenzy that is being whipped up this election cycle and sighted how many Christian (including several prominent Christian leaders) whether they intend to or not are proclaiming through their words and actions, *"Put your faith and hope in government and the courts, not in Jesus."*¹

To be clear, this isn't just a writer trying to generate a name for himself, nor is this merely modern day phenomenon or a product of this current election cycle. This is an application that comes straight out of God's Word. It a declaration of Scripture, a warning of biblical proportions, that we see more than once in the Holy Word of God. In Psalm 146, the psalmist puts it this way, ***"Do not put your trust in princes, in mortal men, who cannot save. ⁴When their spirit departs, they return to the ground; on that very day their plans come to nothing. Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God, ⁶the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them— the LORD, who remains faithful forever. (Psalm 146:3-6)***

¹ Foster, Jason; "Why 'God And Country' Christianity Is Just Another Phony Prosperity Gospel", September 19, 2016, [www.huffingtonpost.com](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/why-god-and-country-christianity-is-just-another_us_57e0324ee4b0d5920b5b32db)
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/why-god-and-country-christianity-is-just-another_us_57e0324ee4b0d5920b5b32db

In our day and age, and in our nation, we do not live under the rule of kings and princes, and yet this remains the warning and the plea. Do not put your utmost trust in human beings, or earthly governments, or any other institutions over and above the LORD. But above all trust in God and serve him with all your heart. ***Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD their God. He is the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them— he remains faithful forever. (Psalm 146:5-6)***

The LORD remains faithful. That is who he is. He is faithful. The very name, the LORD, cries out with this steadfast truth of the holy nature of God. The LORD is the covenant God who can be trusted, who never changes, who makes and keeps his promises. In a changing world, surrounded by the ever-changing tides of shifting morals and shaky policies, fleeting opinions and the unstable decisions of sinful human beings; in the midst of all this, our God remains steadfast. He is faithful and constant. He is wise and eternal. He is the LORD. Put your trust in him and serve *HIM* with all your heart.

Remember the context of these words of 1 Samuel. After the heavens thundered and God sent rain at the request of his prophet, then the people finally stood in awe of the Almighty God. It was suddenly clear to them that he was the only one who had the power to protect and save. Earthly rulers all try their best to project and display power and control, but none of them could ever control the wind and the rain, only the LORD could do that. As the people stood there before God's prophet, as they came to their senses, as they realized their foolish disrespect of God himself, Samuel assures the people not only of the power and the greatness of God, but also of his faithfulness, his grace, and his mercy. ***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 (1 Samuel 12:22).*** God in his wisdom and mercy had chosen this little nation to be his own. He had called them out of obscurity to bless them as a nation and then bless all nations through the promised Savior. And it is because of this saving plan that the members of our modern day nation, and peoples all over the world, still call on the name of the LORD God of Israel. He is the only one who brings eternal salvation.

The political frenzy that is being whipped up around us may or may have not taken its toll on us recently, but we must admit that we too display a lack of trust in our LORD whenever we worry, and become overly concerned and anxious about the state of this nation. We may even become so passionate about the state of this nation that we cross a line that we should not; bad-mouthing people or disgracefully arguing with others. Now there is nothing wrong with being interested in politics or involved in the election. We can even express our views and be passionate, but we do so as we do all things, as we are serving the LORD. Our ultimate trust is in him. Trust in the LORD with all your heart.

Whatever leader is elected, whatever policies are adopted, whatever appointments are made we serve the LORD trusting that he will care for us. We should not lose sleep over the prospect that this person or that person might win, for we have a peace in Christ Jesus that surpasses all understanding (Philippians 4:7). Our eternal LORD and God is in control and we will trust in him. He tells us to honor the governing authorities and to obey them unless they tell us to something that directly contradicts Scripture (Acts 5:29).

Samuel speaks to this point as well. Samuel would continue to serve the people of his nation by praying for them and by directing them that which is good and right. God's prophet would continue to serve the people with God's holy Word. Again this can serve as a helpful guide

in our circumstance. Who tells us what is good and right? Do we allow our views to be molded by political parties and their leaders, who are prone to human error, or do we look to God's inerrant Word? As those who are first and foremost citizens of heaven and children of God, we are to look to God's Word always. And as we live as citizens of heaven in this nation on earth we live for the LORD. We carry out our Christian and civil responsibilities as best as we can; and we pray. We can pray for our nation and for our fellow citizens, even those who have different views that you do.

Only God knows what is store for this nation. Only God knows what is store for his church on earth. However, the God who makes kingdoms rise and fall tells us that his church will endure, no matter what is happening in national or world politics, the church will endure onto eternity. He will care for his people. He doesn't tell us exactly what our earthly future holds as individuals nor as a nation, but God tells us all that we need to know for our eternal salvation in his Holy Word. And this is ultimately the most important thing that we will ever need to know. As we live out our lives in the sure hope of heaven we are to fear the LORD who sent his Son to save us and we are to serve him with all our heart. We are to trust in him. See that the LORD is faithful. Consider what great things he has done for you.

Consider how he has called you to be his own. Consider how the king of heaven and earth, came down from heaven, to take our evil upon himself, to be covered in the guilt of our sin, and be punished in our place. He endured our shame. He took on the full wrath of God for our evil, for our wickedness, for our ignorant wanderings, and defiant disobedience. He does not forsake us as we deserve but instead he gives his people righteousness, and his victory over sin and death. He is the risen and ascended one who called us to faith, called us out of sin and obscurity and makes us his holy people. He is the one who will bring us to his side so that we may rule with him for all eternity. The LORD Jesus is the way the truth and the life. He is the only one who can save. And now we are to follow him in truth. We are to trust him with all our heart and serve him faithfully. We are to proclaim his holy name and give him thanks as we live for him.

People speak passionately about politics, about this candidate or that. Some really pay attention to the issues and they know what is going on and get excited about their views. Let us serve our God with a similar passion. In a world where many people often half-heartedly support candidates and vote for them because they are so opposed to the other side, how blessed we are that we can wholeheartedly serve our God. Trust the LORD. Serve him with all your heart, with daily thanksgiving and eternal praise.

Dear Christian, do not put your trust in princes, in flawed human beings, in useless and confusing and temporary things; do not make an idol out of the blessing of a nation that God has given to us. Instead give thanks to the Lord. Give you attention to his Holy Word. Know who your God is and believe in him. Trust in him alone and serve the LORD with all your heart. Consider what great things he has done for you and will continue to do for us. Trust in him and know that the LORD is mighty, he is merciful, and he is faithful. ***Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD their God. He is the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them— he remains faithful forever (Psalm 146:5-6).*** Amen.