

Verse 14 promises prosperity for following the Lord. Verse 15 warns of disaster in case of rebellion. These verses recall Deuteronomy 11:26-28: “See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you today, and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way that I am commanding you today, to go after other gods that you have not known. And when the Lord your God brings you into the land that you are entering to take possession of it, you shall set the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal.” This scene between the mountains is again foretold in Deuteronomy 27 and realized in Joshua 8.

Samuel is indeed a prophet. We know that the children of Israel will spend centuries under a succession of good and bad kings,

alternately enjoying the blessings on Mount Gerizim and being drawn back toward the curse of Mount Ebal.

The Christian who puts himself under the law can be trapped in the same valley of misery. “For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing” (Romans 7:18-19).

The way out of the valley is to realize that “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us” (Galatians 5:13). We still aim to please God but under the law of liberty, not the law of sin and death.

#### Notes

**12:17** Rain during harvest time was so rare as to be considered supernatural. See Proverbs 26:1.

#### Questions for study and discussion:

1. What is Samuel’s purpose in this speech to the people?
2. Samuel’s words in verse 3, “Here I am,” echo his first recorded words in chapter 3. Also see Paul’s words in Acts 20:33. What is the lesson for Christian elders and leaders?
3. Verse 6 recounts the Lord’s deliverance of His people from bondage in Egypt. That event is used many times in both the Old and New Testament as a witness against the people, to remind them of where they came from and what they owe to their Lord. What is a comparable event for the Christian believer? For the unconverted Gentile?

4. Verse 14 puts the people of Israel under obligation to follow the Lord and promises all will be well if both the people and king obey. What is the obligation of the people if the king himself turns away from God?
5. Can you think of other occasions where the children of Israel have sworn to follow God and failed? What is the New Testament advice on this?
6. What reason does Samuel give that the Lord will not utterly forsake his people? (See also Joshua 7:9-11, Daniel 9:18-19).
7. Read verse 23. If we neglect to pray for others, is that just carelessness or something more serious?