

# Pursuing the Pattern of the World

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Date: 14 January 2024

Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[ 0:00 ] We're going to begin our worship this evening, and we're singing firstly in Psalm 48a. 48a, that's on page 63, singing to Choon Paisley, and we're singing verses 1 to 8.

Great is the Lord who rules on high, with praise his temple fill, within the city of our God and on his holy hill. Mount Zion, with its graceful height, gives joy to all the earth.

The great king's city far excels, the mountains of the north. Within her citadels and towers, God's presence is revealed, for he has shown himself to be her fortress and her shield.

Down as far as verse 8, these verses, great is the Lord. Mount Zion, with praise his temple fill, within the city of our God and on his holy hill.

Mount Zion, with its graceful height, gives joy to all the earth.

[ 1:36 ] Mount Zion, with its graceful height, gives joy to all the earth. The great king's city far excels, the mountains of the north.

John 9.FI 29a, this day has beenures by king and on his holy hill. God's presence is revealed.

For he has shown himself to thee, had fortress and earth shield.

When kings joined forces to attack, as one they marched ahead.

They saw hand and they were amazed, they all in terror play.

[ 2:55 ] Like women giving birth in pain, they trembled in disdain.

You wrecked them like a merchant tree, by tempest blown away.

As we have heard, so have we seen, God's city will endure.

The Lord Almighty evermore has sent in his Savior.

Let's once more join together now in prayer. Let's call upon the Lord in prayer. Lord, our ever-blessed God, gracious and merciful, full of kindness, full of loving kindness toward his people, God who will by no means clear the guilty, yet you have provided forgiveness for us.

[ 4:24 ] We bless you, Lord our God, that we come together tonight to praise you. And we have already used these words in your praise that remind us and teach us of the way in which you are so unchangeably the king of your people, and of which they too are your people, your flock, that city that you prepare for your abode forevermore.

We thank you, Lord, tonight, that we come in acknowledgement of your greatness. And we thank you that as we sing your praises and acknowledge your greatness, so we also take note for our own assurance of your interest in your people, of your provision for them, of your care and attention to them each and every moment of their lives.

Lord, we pray that these great truths may be impressed upon us tonight as well as we come to worship you here together. We pray that they may be a reality for us throughout each and every day of our lives.

Lord, we need your truth each day to occupy our hearts and our minds and guide our thoughts. We need the power of your truth working within us by your Holy Spirit's energy in such a way that will daily lead us in the ways of righteousness.

Lord, we come before you not only to bring you our praises and our thanksgivings, but also our confessions. A confession of our sin, confession of our own failures in so many ways to be what we should be.

[ 6 : 01 ] A confession, Lord, how far short we come in every way, in every aspect of our lives, short of glorifying your great name as we ought to.

Forgive us, we pray, and cleanse us from our iniquities this night. We thank you that your word reveals to us the extent of our sinfulness and the various ways in which our sin itself is active in our lives, from the root of sin within us in our fallenness to the very acts of transgression and of sin that we ourselves are guilty of each day.

And we thank you for the freeness with which pardon is available to us. You have opened a fountain for us for sin and for uncleanness in our Lord Jesus Christ.

We give thanks, O Lord, as we come to you and claim his merits and place our trust in him that we are assured that you will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

and we thank you tonight, Lord, for the assurance that that gives us. For we know that sometimes, indeed very often, Lord, on a daily basis, our sin troubles us.

[ 7 : 15 ] We find ourselves, Lord, sometimes perplexed at how easily we find ourselves straying into the ways of sin, even in our thoughts of mind.

We pray, O Lord, that you would grant us the garrisoning of your truth and the guidance of your spirit throughout each day. And once again, we bring before you our needs as a congregation.

Lord, we thank you for all that you continue to be for us, for everything that you have proved yourself to be down over the course of the years. And as we have begun another new year and our experience as a people, we ask, O Lord, that you would go before us and that you would prepare us to live as your people in the world and to hold forth the word of truth, that word of righteousness, which is so necessary not only for ourselves but for the circumstances in which we find ourselves in our day, when your word is so easily set aside, when your word, Lord, is all too commonly despised and ignored.

And in many ways, Lord, your word is trampled under people's feet and the way in which they're treated. We pray for our community.

We pray for each and every home that we know of around us. We pray for the congregations of your people, not only in this town and this community but throughout our land and indeed throughout the world.

[ 8 : 46 ] We pray, O Lord, that you would prosper your people. We pray that today they may know of your own work amongst them, advancing the understanding that they have of you and increasing their commitment to you.

We pray in all our own activities, O Lord, as a people, that you would bless us and bless us through these activities to the world around us too. We pray for all that happens throughout the course of each week in addition to the services of worship on weeknights and weekdays and also on the Lord's day.

And we give thanks for this day and we give thanks that you have sanctified it and given to us, Lord, that conviction that it is our privilege to know and to acknowledge your day and to come to seek to keep it holy as you have commanded.

And we ask, Lord, when we depart from that too that you would redirect our steps and that you would especially grant to us as a community and as a people that we may once again turn to value your day.

Turn to prize all that it means and all that it has to offer us, especially in the ways of the gospel. And we ask, O gracious one, that you would return to us and return us to that way in which your day should be honored and upheld by us and exalted.

[10:11] Help us, we pray, to commend your day and all its values to our people, to the community around us. Remember, we pray those who rule over us at this time, be near to them, Lord, we pray to give them the help and the insight that they need and perhaps that they themselves do not look for in yourself.

We ask that you would bless our first minister, bless his ministers, bless the prime minister, bless his cabinet, bless the government, bless each and every assembly.

Lord, bless us, we pray, with light from on high. Turn us away from the ways of man and of sin and of secular thinking. Give us, we pray, to have our confidence reset in the Lord.

Enable them, Lord, who rule over us to meaningfully reflect upon what you have been to this nation over the course of the centuries and how much, Lord, we lack of those values that have now been set aside.

Gracious one, we pray that you would return us into your ways and help us to repent over the many ways in which we have fallen short of your glory and your praise and which you have despised your ways.

[11:30] We ask tonight that you bless those who belong to us as a congregation who are ill. We know that there are many, Lord, during this past week or two who have picked up illnesses of various kinds.

And we ask that you would grant blessing to them to restore them to health and to strength. We pray bless those especially who have gone to hospital in these recent days.

We pray for little Matthew McLeod and ask that you bless him and bless his parents as he once again has gone into hospital here. We pray for Donny Graham as he's been taken to hospital in the mainland.

We ask for him that your blessing, Lord, will be with him with all who care for him. Grant that your good hand may be upon him and that you'd be pleased, Lord, to grant your own recovery to him if it please you and your protective care of him.

Remember all who in these days mourn the passing of loved ones. Remember those families in the past week or two who have lost loved ones who belong to us as a people.

[12:33] Grant them your comfort, we pray. Give to them that they may know of you as their God and as their guide and as their stay in this time.

We ask that you would graciously, Lord, bless all others who have begun this new year thinking of times gone by and have loved ones no longer with them. We pray that you would continue to bless them and continue to uphold them and strengthen them.

Continue to give them, we pray, to look to yourself. and we ask that you would grant blessing now to all whom we commit to you in the wider church. We pray for, Lord, all our students in the seminary, for all who teach there, for all the activities related to that training.

We pray for Scott with ourselves and ask that you would continue to bless him in his preparations. Bless Fiona and the family and give them, Lord, as they wait upon you that they will know of your further direction of their lives.

Bless all others, we pray, who in different institutions throughout the world seek to prepare for gospel ministry. We pray for all of these institutions, especially for Reformed seminaries and colleges throughout the world.

[13:49] Lord, grant that they may be kept from straying from your truth and that they may know that your blessing, Lord, is assured to those who trust in you and seek to put your word above the thinking and the wisdom of men.

Graciously bless us now, we pray. Hear us in our prayers and cleanse us from all our sin. For Jesus' sake, Amen. We'll sing again to God's praise.

We're singing this time Psalm 106. That's on page 382. And from verse 43, the tune this time is Argyle. He many times delivered them, but with their counsel so they him provoked that for their sin they were brought very low.

Yet their affliction he beheld when he did hear their cry, and he for them his covenant did call to memory. And Psalms like Psalm 106, as you know, reflect upon some of the history of God's people, covenant people in the Old Testament times, and how frequently they provoked the Lord by their idolatry, by their turning to idols, and so on.

And yet also the psalmist reflects us here on God's great patience with them, his mercy and redirection of them. And we need these things for ourselves, that we sing them meaningfully as we remember the Lord's patience with ourselves.

[15:17] Psalm 106, then from verse 43, he many times delivered them. He many times delivered them, but with their counsel's soul, they did promote that for their sin they were from their very low.

Yet their affliction be held when he did hear their cry, and before them his covenant go of the Zhou malting heart of may c■ thing else in death Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Let's turn now to read God's Word, and you'll find that this evening in the first book of Samuel, first book of Samuel in chapter 8.

We'll read through from the beginning to the end of the chapter. So that's 1 Samuel, and chapter 8 is around page 278 or so.

[18:47] When Samuel became old, he made his sons judges over Israel. The name of his firstborn son was Joel, and the name of his second Abijah. They were judges in Beersheba.

Yet his sons did not walk in his ways, but turned aside after gain. They took bribes and perverted justice. Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, and said to him, Behold, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways.

Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations. But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, Give us a king to judge us.

And Samuel prayed to the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you. For they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them.

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.

[19:53] Now then, obey their voice. Only you shall solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them. So Samuel told all the words of the Lord to the people who were asking for a king from him.

He said, These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you. He will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen and to run before his chariots.

And he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plough his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots.

And he will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his servants.

He will take the tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants. He will take your male servants and female servants and the best of your young men and your donkeys and put them to his work.

[ 21:00 ] He will take the tenth of your flocks and you shall be his slaves. And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves.

But the Lord will not answer you in that day. But the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel. And they said, No, but there shall be a king over us, that we may also be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles.

And when Samuel had heard all the words of the people, he repeated them in the ears of the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, Obey their voice and make them a king.

Samuel then said to the men of Israel, Go, every man, to his city. And may God again bless to us that portion of his word.

Before we turn to this chapter, let's sing again, this time in Psalm 47. 47 in Sing Psalms, that's page 62. And soon as Duke Street will sing these five verses.

[ 22:08 ] All nations, clap your hands and shout. Let joyful cries to God ring out. How awesome is the Lord Most High, great King who rules the earth throughout.

He has subdued beneath our feet the nations who had been our foes in blessing Jacob whom he loved, a heritage for us he chose. So the whole of Psalm 47, all nations, clap your hands and shout.

All nations, clap your hands and shout.

Let joyful cry to God ring out. Let joyful cry to God ring out. How awesome is the Lord Most High, great King to the rules the earth through us.

God bless you. He has subdued beneath our feet the nations who have been our foes in blessing Jacob whom he loved, and blessed in blessing Jacob whom he loved, a heritage for us he chose.

[ 23:45 ] God has got a wish of God, grace of joy that false e ingly tries, God has got a place and jörsden.

And blessed are Michigan for you. His ifi■■■. And so strong who have been the fairest, God has got a place to God, in the hält Casa on r einen like God, in the industrial world where he loved, God gives us the »c labouratio 6°C2– To God our King let praise God.

For God is King of all the earth. Sing sounds of praise to Him alone.

God who's the nations come on high, He sits upon this holy throne.

The leaders of the nations come, To heal themselves, to reign as God.

[ 25:25 ] To Him belong, the kings of all earth. And the kings of the King, the kings of all earth.

Let's turn for a short time now as we wait on the Lord to 1 Samuel chapter 8. And we're looking at most of what's in this chapter. I'd like just to read verse 7 first of all and then on to verse 19 as well.

So at verse 7 we actually read these words. The Lord said to Samuel, Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them.

And then in verse 19, The people refused to obey the voice of Samuel and they said, No, but there shall be a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles.

Well, this is another crucial, critical time in the history and the development of God's people in the Old Testament times, God's covenant people of Israel.

[ 26 : 49 ] As they come to this juncture, they've come to this point where they're demanding really a king of Samuel. And you can see the context in which it happened. It was a very difficult situation for them to manage, and sadly they got it wrong, as they all too often did.

They came in these circumstances. At the beginning of the chapter we read that Samuel had become old, and he had made his sons judges over Israel. But his sons did not walk in his ways, but turned aside after gain, they took bribes and perverted justice.

In other words, the sons of Samuel turned out to be very different to their father. At least in this respect, they didn't judge in a way that was righteous, though he had appointed them to these positions.

And it does remind us, of course, that we cannot have a guarantee that a generation that knows the Lord and serves the Lord and is true to the Lord will be followed by one of the same caliber.

It's the same as true of individuals, of course. But why did they not manage it so well? What was it about the situation that they got wrong? Well, why was it that they got it wrong?

[ 28 : 02 ] Because, as we'll see, they actually put their own preferences ahead of God's direction of them, ahead of God's provision. They put their own wisdom ahead of God's wisdom.

They put their own way of looking at things ahead of the way that God himself had arranged things for them up to that point. I want to look at two things from the passage.

We'll focus on the verses we've mentioned, but we'll see how they fit into the context. First of all, we'll look at the people's demand for a king. And in looking at the demand for a king, we'll see that they turned against Samuel, but more importantly, they rejected God.

That's what God himself said to Samuel. And they have not rejected you, they have rejected me from being king over them. And not only did they turn against Samuel and reject God, but they also rejected the solemn warning that Samuel gave them, having been instructed by God to warn them of what would happen if they got their own desire and got this king that they were looking for, a king to be like the kings of the nations around about them.

All that is built into the demand they had for a king. Secondly, we're going to look at the people's desire to be like the nations around them.

[ 29 : 25 ] Because as we'll see, that's really a fundamental part of their thinking at the time. They wanted a king like the nations, as they put it, that surrounded them. The pagan nations around them, they wanted to be like those nations in the sense that they wanted a leader like those leaders in these nations, kings that went out to battle and proved to be, as they knew very well, these nations had kings that were very much given to pomp and ceremony and attracting a lot of attention to themselves and a lot of resources to themselves, as Samuel indeed warned them.

So the two things, the people's demand for a king and also their desire to be like the nations. Now the demand for a king meant a turning against Samuel, first of all.

All the elders gathered in verse 4, they came to Samuel at Ram and said, Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations.

The fact that their sons were corrupt, to that extent at least, that they took bribes and perverted justice, there's no blame attached to Samuel in that.

And there's no hint of any fault with the way that Samuel presided over the people as a judge, approved of by God and appointed by God. And yet what they're doing is really looking for an excuse so that they'll have a king like the nations around them.

[ 30 : 58 ] So not only do they point attention or give attention, point out the difficulty of having these sons of Samuel who are taking bribes and perverting justice, they're also including Samuel himself and saying, You are old. You're past it.

We need somebody other than you. We need something different. We need a king like the nations around about us. You've saved your time, but you're getting old. In other words, they're really saying, You're no longer fit to be leader, and we want a different type of leader to the leader that you were to us.

And that's a very sad reflection, isn't it, in our thinking of the people at that time, because Samuel at this point was probably around 60 or 65 years old, and yet they're really here saying about him that he's pretty much basically too old to continue as leader, especially in view of the way his sons are behaving.

And it's a very sad reflection on their thinking as a people, that they're using the failure of these sons and the relative age of Samuel himself to be an argument for change.

And the argument for change turned out really to be not so good, because, of course, as you know, the history, they were given a king, King Saul, who turned out not to be the best thing at all for the nation.

[ 32 : 27 ] Where could they have gotten a better leader than Samuel as a judge? If you go back just to the previous chapter, chapter 7 and verses 3 to 10, you'll find there Samuel judging Israel and doing things that really he was led by the Lord to do.

But here he is at that time actually leading the people in terms of the way in which they need to resist their enemies, the hands of the Philistines.

So the people of Israel, they put away the bales, and then Samuel said, Gather to Israel, I will pray to the Lord for you. So they gathered at Mizpah and so on, and they confessed we have sinned against the Lord.

And then as you go through the chapter, the people of Israel said to Samuel, Do not cease to cry out to the Lord our God for us, that he may save us from the hand of the Philistines.

And all the way through there, you find an emphasis on how successfully he led them then against the Philistines. How soon they forgot. How soon they failed to take account of or just dismissed from their thoughts.

[ 33 : 35 ] What Samuel had been to them and the demonstration of God's blessing that they had come to know through Samuel. Well, it's very human, isn't it?

Our failures are really reflected in that in many ways. And here they are saying, You are old, and your sons don't walk in your ways. It's not good enough for us anymore.

Make us a king. Appoint us a king who will go before us. And that's sadly how you find it down through the course of history as well. And you find it on the part of people who even today will say to us, not necessarily within the church, but certainly outside the church in our society, people will say to us, Look, we don't actually want, we don't think that people who are really committed Christians, especially of the type that go to the free church, we don't think they should be given political power or political office.

They're not really fit to be in office. It's not a new thing, but it fits into the same category, really in principle, people saying, Well, you know, that's no longer something that's relevant or fit for our times, for our days.

So here's a turning against Samuel. But more importantly and more seriously, they're really turning against God. Samuel took the matter to God.

[ 34 : 59 ] That's so typical of Samuel. He actually took the matter to God in prayer. And God said to him, Obey the voice of the people, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them.

And he went on to say, This is just how they had always been. They showed themselves to have been very fickle people, people who very soon forgot what the Lord had done for them and turned to idols or to other ways of living their lives.

And that's what he says, They have rejected me. According to all the deeds they have done from the day I brought them out of Egypt, even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you.

Now, therefore, obey their voice. Now, God is not approving, in principle, of what they're asking for, not approving of the way they're going about it, but they're going to find out that if God gives a people or a person over to their own desires, it's not going to be a very good outcome.

And what God is really saying to Samuel is, Obey them, give them what they're asking for, but tell them at the same time what it's going to mean for them. They have not rejected you.

[ 36:17 ] They have rejected me. In other words, they were tired. They had gone tired of God's arrangement of their lives, of their lives as a people, of God's provision for them.

And once you start getting tired or not really seeing the relevance of what God is providing for us in the gospel, that's very much a danger signal to yourself and to myself or to any society or people.

If we find the ways of God becoming somewhat boring, if we're saying, well, we need a change because this has just been going on, the same emphases in the gospel for years, the same type of thing being emphasized in the teaching of the Bible, the same kind of things that the Bible is bringing out for us.

It was okay for Paul's day. It's okay in the Old Testament days. But really, we need to change that for our day. You know, if you and I get tired ourselves or begin to just become a bit weary of reading the same things in the Bible that are so central and so important to a Christian life and to a life of pleasing God, well, we have to really beware of that because that means we're on the path that really leads to decline and to maybe even falling away from God altogether.

So that's what they had become tired of. And you know, all the way through history, not least with these people of Israel during the Old Testament days, you really have to admire the patience of God.

[ 37:48 ] We sang in some of the Psalms tonight that of God's patience with the people of Israel, despite the fact that He had done so much for them, they turned against Him, they rebelled against Him, and yet for His mercy's sake, He again forgave them.

When they cried out to Him, He heard them. You know, tonight, we just cannot possibly measure the patience of God, the forbearance of God, the long-suffering of God.

Look at your own life as I need to look at mine. How many times have you and I provoked the Lord? How many times have we failed to do what He requires us to do? How many times has our thinking gone astray in our thoughts about God and about His wisdom and about His arrangement of our lives as well?

And yet He's not gone away and He's not kicked us into touch, as it were, and just left us there. Tonight, we are worshiping the patient God.

That's no excuse for us to continue to resist Him or to reject Him or to choose some other way rather than His, but it does demonstrate the caliber of our God, the glorious nature of our God as a God of patience and of mercy and of long-suffering.

[ 39 : 11 ] And here He is with Israel as well so many times proving that. So, there's a turning against Samuel, but there's also a rejection of God and along with that, there's a rejection of very solemn warnings because God said to Samuel, now then, obey their voice, verse 9, only you shall solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them.

In other words, Samuel was to tell the people, if you get a king like the nations that are around you, you'll suffer for it. It's not going to be an easy journey for you.

He's going to take lots of the things that you presently prize and hold precious and he's going to use them for himself and he's going to be greedy of his own personal gain and his own personal prestige and you're going to have to give him as much, at least as you're now giving, to the service of God in the tithes that you're giving in the offerings of the temple and the offerings of the sanctuary.

That's what He's saying to them. This is the kind of king He will be if He's going to emulate, as you want, the kings of these nations. If you're going to be led by that sort of king, this is what it's going to mean for you.

So Samuel came back and told them this. In that day, he says in verse 18, you will cry out because of your king whom you have chosen, but the Lord will not answer you in that day.

[ 40 : 40 ] If you go down this route, he's saying, this is really going to be the situation you'll be in. What did they do? They said, no, but we will have a king. Whatever God says, whatever you say, whatever your advice is, whatever your counsel is, this is how we want it.

We insist on this. We want to be like the nations around us. So you can tell us what you like, really, pretty much is what they're saying to Samuel. You can say what you like, but we will have a king to rule over us.

You see, God is letting them have their way for the moment. And that's always very ominous.

And it's something that you and I have to be always careful to avoid that we don't provoke the Lord by a long-term departure or sinning against Him and Him saying to us, well, have it your way.

See how you get on. See what it means for you. You know, He did that more than once with the people of Israel. Remember back in Numbers chapter 11, how they complained so much about the food and that they had left Egypt and left the delicious food they'd left in Egypt and hankered back for these delicacies in Egypt.

[ 42 : 01 ] And here they were rising up against Moses and complaining against God and His provision. And God said to Moses pretty much in these words, give them food.

Or He's saying, I'll give them food. I'll give them so much that they'll loathe it by the time I'm finished with them. So the wind came and drove hundreds and hundreds of quails into the camp of Israel.

And they began to eat the quails and I'm sure they tasted delicious to begin with. And yet, that chapter goes on to say, while the food was still in their teeth, it's not just saying literally still in their teeth, but it really means as they were eating and as they were enjoying the quails that they had, or the food that they had demanded, the Lord plagued them greatly.

It doesn't say how many died. It doesn't say anything further than that. But the Lord plagued them greatly. Sent a great plague amongst them. God was teaching them or seeking to draw their mind to the fact, you have it your way and it's going to hurt you.

You have it in a way that departs from my ways. It's not going to be good for you. It's going to be very painful. Might even mean something like it was for the Israelites.

[ 43 : 24 ] A life of much suffering. Well, here is the demand for a king.

A turning against Samuel, despite all that he had been to them over the course of his life. And a turning against God, a rejection of God as king. And a rejection of the solemn warnings that God had sent through Samuel.

Now we're going to look in a minute at how important the Word of God is in all of this. But let's just stop at that juncture and ask ourselves tonight, have we been neglectful of God's Word to us?

Have we been dismissing the promises or the warnings or both in God's Word that He brings to us? Has God's Word struck our hearts at any time or more than once in such a way as has convicted of our need to turn from sin and to come to trust in the Lord, to repent of our sin, to confess our sin, to follow Christ, and yet we're still not complying with that demand of God?

Well, be careful. Don't actually treat God as if it's just some piece of human advice. Here is what Samuel said to the people.

[ 44 : 50 ] And here is the response. No, but there shall be a king over us. That's the second point we want to look at. The people's desire to be like the nations.

Now, if you go back to verses 4 and 5 where they gathered together and said, You are old and your sons do not walk in your way. That, in a sense, is a pretext. It's not that it wasn't true, but they were presenting that as a pretext for the real reason that they wanted a change in their circumstances was because they wanted to be like the nations round about them.

That's really what they were concerned to be, even though they could say Samuel was old and his sons were corrupt and took bribes. This is really what was moving them. This is really the real reason behind their request.

They wanted to be like the nations around them. They wanted to be similar to them or identical to them in this sense, that they would have a king set over them just like the nations.

Well, it's always a really serious matter when God's people don't want to be different to the world. When God's people are not really careful to make that distinction between themselves and the world around them.

[ 46 : 09 ] Here are God's covenant people. Here are God's people instructed over the years that God is their king, that they have their life regulated and governed by him and not only by him in a general sense but in a very specific sense at many times.

The God who led them out of Egypt, who delivered them out of Egypt as he reminds them in this chapter through Samuel. The God who actually brought them the redemption from Egypt that they enjoyed and are enjoying.

Who brought them into the land that he had promised them. Who fulfilled all of these things. And what is he saying now through Samuel? They have not rejected you but they have rejected me. They don't want me to be a king invisibly over them and yet certainly their leader, their guide, their protector, their carer.

They want someone they can see. They want someone like the nations. They want a figurehead that they can actually point to and say look at our king, look at how glorious he is. And when we find ourselves tempted to fall in with the ways of the world, that again is a really serious issue for us.

There are many places tonight, many worshiping groups tonight, many churches, many denominations, many congregations, many individuals who preach the gospel, who preach, at least to preach from the Bible, who have come to embrace the ideologies of the world, who have come to embrace the ideology that's so concerned to adjust our thoughts about marriage, about gender, about education, about religious freedom, so many things you could add to that in our own society right now.

[ 47:59 ] I'm not talking about the world, I'm talking about confessing Christians that want to be as like the world as to import that ideology into their own thinking. They're just like Israel in those days.

We want a king to be like the nations that are around us. You know, when you come to actually find any people who confess the Lord as their God to say, well, we need to really adjust our lifestyle to suit the thinking of the age.

We need an ideology that takes away from this ancient Reformed view of the Bible and of a Christian life and of what a people and a society should look like and how they should behave.

And what have you left with if you lose the gospel in its thoroughness and its fullness?

Well, let me just take you back to 1 Kings or forward to 1 Kings because Solomon was followed by his son Rehoboam and Rehoboam consulted with the old men, the senior men who were there at the time after Solomon's death and King Rehoboam took counsel with the old men who had stood before Solomon his father while he was yet alive saying, how do you advise me to answer this people?

[ 49:31 ] And they said to him, if you will be a servant to this people today and serve them and speak good words to them and when you answer them then they will be your servants forever. But he abandoned the counsel that the old men gave him and took counsel of the young men who had grown up with him and stood before him.

And so that's where he turned, that's where he turned to. And then as you go on you can see the kingdom was divided and then you go forward to chapter 14 and what you find in chapter 14 from verse 25 is that Shishak the king of Egypt he came against Jerusalem and he took away the treasures of the house of the Lord and the treasures of the king's house.

He took away everything. He also took away all the shields of gold that Solomon had made and King Rehoboam made in their place shields of bronze.

How pathetic is that? He gave away the shields of gold. He probably had not much option because Shishak had come to him and he had not followed the ways of the Lord anyway so he was weakened in many ways.

He couldn't stand against King Shishak of Egypt at that moment. Shishak took away all the shields of gold that Solomon had made and he fashioned in their stead replicas.

[ 50:58 ] Replicas made of bronze. Now from a distance you might think bronze is actually gold if the sun is shining and you polished it hard enough but it's not gold. And unless you look very hard at versions of the gospel that want to make it fit into the ideologies of the moment you might think well you've still got the gospel.

No you don't. If you give away the essentials of the gospel you don't have a gospel left. You have nothing left here that will really reform the lives of people through the blessing of God of course but the Lord will have us always to retain the essential matters of the gospel.

That's why we have to value our reformed heritage and I'm going to mention two things in that in closing. Our reformed heritage for the day in which we live there's so much within that that we need to maintain and prize and promote but especially I want to emphasize the Bible itself and the ethics of the Bible.

The Bible itself and the ethics of the Bible because the Bible is to be our ethical base our basis for morality what a life should be like what a life should be like as we live it.

A conviction about the Bible. Why am I saying a conviction about the Bible? Why is that central? Why is that of first importance? Surely you might say well surely you should be emphasizing Christ first.

[ 52:35 ] Shouldn't you be emphasizing keeping to the person of Christ that we have in our reformed theology and thinking that's been passed on to us through the years? Yes of course but where does that come from? What is the source of our information about Jesus and about his atonement and about his person about the fact that he's God and man fully in both senses?

You come to that from the Bible and once you adjust the Bible then there's no telling where you're going to end up adjusting all other sorts of doctrines that follow on from the doctrine of scripture itself.

You give away the shields of gold and you're going to be left with at best bronze maybe even copper maybe even lead. What I'm saying is give away the essential core issues of the gospel.

What have you got left? At best you've got a very faded replica which is not the real thing. Friends, prize your Bibles.

I know you're doing that but I know also for me and for you there's always a voice not far away from the dark one. That will say as he said long ago to our first parents to Adam has God really said don't you need to adjust this to fit the thinking of the day?

[ 54:03 ] Don't you need to just give away some of those more robust reformed teachings because people don't want that nowadays and you don't want a gospel that people don't want? That's the argument.

That's the ideology of the age and that's the kind of temptation that we face. But what is the Bible? That's where you have to begin.

You don't have to begin with what does the Bible say? That comes next. First thing you do is what is the Bible? And the Bible is the Word of God and we just briefly mention from the confession of faith.

This paragraph in chapter 1 paragraph 5 We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the church to a high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scripture.

Then listen to this. The heavenliness of the matter the efficacy of the doctrine the majesty of the style the consent of all the parts the scope of the whole which is to give all glory to God the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation the many other incomparable excellencies and the entire perfection thereof are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God.

[ 55:33 ] Nevertheless notwithstanding our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.

Now where people reject the Bible as authoritative as God's Word that has certainly not come from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.

That's why we pray for God to keep us not just the likes of myself and others who preach the Gospel but yourselves as well as people in this world who live for Christ make sure that you have the Bible centrally foundationally daily constantly in your life.

It's from it you receive everything you know and understand of every other topic that's vital to you including God himself and the Lord Jesus Christ and salvation.

But secondly not just a conviction about the Bible but conformity to the Bible's ethic. Our conformity to the Bible's ethic I'm talking here about the teaching of the Bible as a whole with regard to what our moral Christian life should be and should be like.

[ 57:02 ] conformity to the ethic of the Bible not the other way about. Not the Bible conforming to what I think my ethic should be or what I insist on it to be.

Romans chapter 12 verse 2 Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

See what it's saying? Don't be conformed to this world but be transformed. And here we are in a society where from the government downwards we're now being led down the path of insisting that people should not be asked or demanded to have their lives changed in any way.

Be what you want to be. Be what's good for you as you see it. Let your gender, let your behavior, let whatever is pleasing to yourself let that be what you follow out and don't let anyone else seek to change that for you.

And that's why we're facing and friends I'm saying this because the Bible has to be applied to our present circumstances and our present circumstances are that our own government in Scotland Westminster I think is involved too to an extent but our own government has made it known that they do have thoughts and plans in what they call a law that would actually ban gender conversion.

[ 58 : 40 ] Whatever is meant by that they don't give you a plain answer. But what that means is and you know this is what the Christian Institute said about it Scottish government wants to outlaw practices that seek to change suppress or inhibit someone's sexual orientation or gender identity.

Activists that's people out with the government as well activists are campaigning for this to cover quote casual conversations quote gentle non-coercive prayer and even depending on your parents consent to change gender.

In other words if that were to become law I could actually find myself in a court of law accused of having prayed with someone and asking God to either change their mind or to give them a different perspective on life.

I would be criminalized for being faithful to God. That's what's likely to be the case and despite assurances and we're thankful there are assurances that say well religious practices will not actually come under such a proposed law.

believe believe that if you will. That's not the pattern from the past. Now if there is to be a consultation I'm not politicizing the pulpit this is part of the gospel's presentation into the world of our day.

[ 60 : 23 ] If there is a consultation please make sure you complete it. A government consultation for your views on this. and if you want to consult the Christian Institute they will give you the words that you need to put them into your own words but they'll give you guidance as to how to fill in the various parts of that consultation.

Friends we are in a war. We're in the midst of a conflict not just for the soul of the country but for the soul of the church for the soul of the gospel.

we're in a situation which says no let's be like the world around us. A situation that says you Christians you really should take note of people's preferences and not try to insist on such things as the Bible says about being born again or being changed in such a way as to come to comply Christ's commands.

Well there's the people's demand for a king and there's the people's desire to be like the nations. Above all friends let's pray.

Let's pray and appeal to God and do everything else practical we can to protect what has come to us sometimes at great cost from the past.

[ 62 : 02 ] Principles for life and practices for life which in some cases people died for. We're not going to let them slip through our hands are we? We're not going to be like those of Israel who say let's just be like the world let's just fall into and fall in with the pattern of the world.

Let's just be as like the world as we can and then we'll win them over to the gospel. It won't happen. Let's be true to our King Jesus to his truth.

Let's pray. Lord our God our Father in heaven we thank you for your truth. We pray for grace and for your own equipping of us to maintain that truth in its purity in the gospel in our own way of living it as well.

And we ask oh Lord that for us as a nation too we be turned back into your ways. Lord deliver us we pray from the counsel of mere mortals especially when that counsel is contrary to your word and so obviously at odds with your will.

Lord we pray that in mercy you'd remember and come to us in such a way that would even surprise your people by coming with reviving and quickening power to us.

[ 63 : 31 ] Continue with us now and bless us and pardon our sin for Jesus sake. Amen. Our final item of praise this evening is Psalm 135 and that's in the Sing Psalms version to tune Stuttgart that's on page 176 singing verses 8 to 14 Here are the exploits of the Lord again in the psalmist way of putting it in these verses He struck down all Egypt's firstborn man and beast alike were slain mighty signs he showed in Egypt routing Pharaoh and his men many nations he defeated kings he slew with mighty hand all Gophbation and King Sihon all the kings of Canaan's land all their lands he gave to Jacob to his people

Israel as a heritage he gave them lands where they might safely dwell Lord your name endures forever your renown is ever great for the Lord sustains his servants and his folk will vindicate these verses from verse 8 and the tune of Stuttgart Amen He struck down all Egypt's firstborn but not peace like firstborn mighty signs he showed in Egypt right in Jerusalem and his men when the nations he defeated kings he slew with mighty hand all of patient the king's child all the kings of

Canaan's land all their sons he gave to Jacob to his people Israel as the head it takes he gave lands where they might save me dwell Lord your name endures forever you will be now this ever made for the Lord says Jesus serve and his hope will be came after the benediction I'll go to the main door and now may grace and mercy and peace from God the

Father the Son and the Holy Spirit be your portion now and ever more Amen through