

1 Samuel 8

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Date: 11 January 2015

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[0 : 00] A series in this book, and we'll be continuing for a while in our evening service looking at the book of 1 Samuel and what it has to teach us for today.

So let me read chapter 8, 1 Samuel chapter 8, and then we'll dig into it together. 1 Samuel chapter 8, when Samuel became old, he made his sons judges over Israel.

The name of his firstborn son was Joel, 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. 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 haven't rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them.

[1 : 30] 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 doing also to you. 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 are 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, some to plow his ground and to reap his harvest and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots.

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. He will take the tenth of your flocks and you shall be his slaves.

[2 : 36] 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 also may be like all the nations and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles.

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.

A long time ago, an unknown soldier wrote the following. I asked God for strength that I might achieve. I was made weak that I might learn humbly to obey.

I asked for health that I might do greater things. I was given infirmity that I might do better things. I asked for riches that I might be happy.

I was given poverty that I might be wise. I asked for power that I might have the praise of men. I was given weakness that I might feel my need for God. I asked for all things that I might enjoy life.

[3 : 53] I was given life that I might enjoy all things. I got nothing that I asked for, but everything I hoped for. Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered.

I am among all men most richly blessed. Very often there's a difference between what we want and what we need. In tonight's passage, we see a group of people facing a national crisis.

Facing a real problem. And demanding what they wanted. What they thought that they needed. And then we see God through the prophet Samuel warning them that what they think they need. What they were saying. What they really wanted. Wasn't really what they needed. Now we'll look at this passage in three parts. We'll look at first, the problem they were facing. Second, the demand. For what they wanted. And third, God's provision in the long run of what they really needed. So first, their problem.

[4 : 57] Just to set a little bit of the background in this book of Samuel. So far in the first seven chapters, we've seen God raising up Samuel to lead the people of Israel in a dark time.

The book of Samuel begins at one of the low points of Israel's history. It was a time when the leaders were corrupt. When their enemies were a constant threat. When they were dissolving at times into civil war.

Spiritually speaking, it was a time of approaching darkness. And increasing chaos. And ominous silence. And God raised up Samuel as a prophet.

To speak his word into the silence. And to bring order into the chaos. And to shine light into the darkness. And in chapter seven, the last chapter, God used Samuel to deliver the people from the enemies who were threatening them.

The Philistines. And to judge the people with wisdom. And fairness. But the problem we see here in verses one through three. Samuel's getting old. And his sons didn't walk in his ways.

[6 : 02] Samuel loved God. And he loved the people. And so his leadership resulted in stability. His sons loved money. And they loved themselves. And the result was instability.

And chaos. The future didn't look good. For the people of Israel. And it's a pattern, interestingly, that happens multiple times in this book of Samuel.

That God-fearing, a God-fearing generation is then succeeded by a self-centered generation. So Eli the priest knew the Lord.

His sons didn't. And his sons used their authority in the priesthood for their own gain and their own benefit. Samuel judged wisely and impartially. His sons took bribes.

And sought after dishonest gain. David would later become the greatest king of Israel. But then his sons ended up literally killing each other. And you might ask, how does that happen?

[7 : 05] How does one generation, parents who love God, how are they succeeded by people who could care less? It shouldn't be that way.

Now the Bible doesn't tell us exactly how that happened. But it does say that it happened. And sometimes it still happens. Now Samuel wasn't directly responsible for the selfish behavior, self-serving behavior of his adult children.

But what he was responsible for was he put his sons in leadership positions. And he didn't really hold them accountable. Verse 1 says, when Samuel became old, he made his sons judges over Israel.

But if you read the book of Judges, which is sort of the background of the book of Samuel, Samuel actually didn't have to do that. The office of judge was not a hereditary office that was supposed to be passed on from father to son.

From parent to child. Right? In fact, in Judges 8, the men of Israel came to Gideon, one of the judges, and they said, rule over us. You and your son and your grandson.

[8 : 12] Set up a dynasty. And Gideon said, no. I won't rule over you. Nor will my son rule over you. The Lord will rule over you. So Samuel put his sons in positions of spiritual leadership, but they failed to live up to their responsibility.

And he didn't act decisively. Now, he did put them down in Beersheba. Now, that was in the southern, it was sort of the remote southern part of the country. So he sort of put them off in a remote place, maybe to limit their influence.

But the problem was they weren't fit to lead anywhere. Not in the remote part of the country, not in the central part of the country where Samuel was. And putting them there only contained the problem temporarily.

It didn't actually solve it. You know, one of the biggest challenges for every generation is passing on the responsibility for spiritual leadership to the next generation.

So in the New Testament, 2 Timothy 2.2, Paul says to Timothy, What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others also.

[9 : 21] And along with teaching others, Paul talks about setting an example for others. So if you're in a position of Christian leadership, whether that's leading a Bible study for other college students, or whether that's being an elder or a deacon in a church, or whatever it might be, being a parent, one of the most important tasks that you're called to, is to train up other people who love God, who can lead alongside you, and then who you can eventually pass on your responsibility to.

Because one day, like Samuel, you'll grow old. And you won't be, or you might have to move out of town. Or for whatever reason, you won't be able to be that leader anymore, and you'll have to find someone else to succeed you.

And this is where many otherwise godly Christian leaders have failed. Many times through the years. Either they haven't been willing to share leadership at all, and so, when they finally die, their whole organization, their whole ministry falls apart, because they don't let anyone else have, they don't let anyone else into that leadership circle, or, they're not careful about who they invite to lead with them, or who they pass on the leadership to, and it goes downhill.

So this is a warning. That we see. And this is the problem that the people were facing. And so the elders, what we see is the elders of Israel, they recognize this problem, rightly, but then the second thing we see is what they think they need.

They come to Samuel, and say, here's what we want. Verse 4. Or verse 5.

[11 : 09] They say, Behold, you are old, and your sons don't walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king, to judge us like all the nations. Now just as a background, there hadn't been a king in Israel so far.

So the people of Israel had been led by different judges, who were raised up sort of one by one, generation by generation, person by person, that God raised up at different times to lead the people of Israel.

And the people say, enough of this judge stuff. Give us a king. Give us a dynasty. Now verse 6 says, Samuel was immediately displeased.

On the one hand, he probably felt personally offended. Because he had been a judge. And he had, he probably felt like, man, like, you're coming to me and saying, my replacements aren't doing well, and we need to restructure.

And I'm at the end of my career path. Facing the end of his life, felt like they were criticizing his leadership. But God says more than that, it's not just about them criticizing you, it's about them rejecting me.

[12 : 22] God said, what's really behind their request is not them rejecting you as a person, it's them rejecting me. And, and clinging on to other things.

Other gods instead. You see, their request for a king, it wasn't wrong in principle. In fact, God has, God had always planned to one day establish a king in Israel and carry out his purposes through a king.

So even before this place in the Bible, there had been promises. In Genesis 49, God had promised that one day a ruler would arise from the tribe of Judah who all the nations would obey.

And in the book of Deuteronomy, God had said to the people of Israel, when you go into the land and you say, I want to have a king like all the nations around me, he says, you may indeed set a king over you whom the Lord your God will choose.

It wasn't wrong in principle to have a king. What was wrong? You might ask with their request. The problem wasn't their request, it was their attitude.

[13 : 33] And we see three indications of what was wrong with their attitude. The first indication we see is they demanded from Samuel instead of depending on God.

You know, when we face real problems, real dangers, real insecurities, if we don't cry out to God in prayer and dependence on Him, we'll often turn to other people and start demanding insistently from them.

Notice what Samuel did. Verse 6. He heard the people's request. The first thing he does, he prayed to the Lord. Even before he responded to them, he prayed to God.

And then again, verse 21. He heard all the words of the people and it says he repeated them in the ears of the Lord. He went right to God and said, here's what they're saying.

What do I do with this? But by contrast, the other leaders of Israel don't pray at all. Now interestingly, if you look back just in the last chapter, in chapter 7, three times, three times, the leaders of Israel pray.

[14:48] Chapter 7, verse 3 says, all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord. Chapter 7, verse 6, they gathered at Mizpah and fasted and said, we have sinned against the Lord.

Chapter 7, verse 8, the people came to Samuel and asked him, don't stop crying out to the Lord on our behalf. And Samuel cried out to the Lord for them and God answered him.

But here in chapter 8, they don't ask Samuel to pray for them. They don't pray to God themselves. They just come to Samuel and they demand. They say, give us a king.

Samuel, you can solve our problems. Has someone ever come to you like that? You can solve all my problems.

This is what you need to do. Now. And if you do that, they're going to come to you again. A week later.

[15:48] And say, this is what I need you to do. And only you can do it. It's not a fun place to be in. You see, when we don't come before God and ask him for what we need, we can sometimes end up making excessive demands from other people.

So that's the first issue with their attitude. They demanded from Samuel instead of depending on God. The second issue with their attitude is that they spoke, but they refused to listen.

In fact, Samuel listened to them, but they didn't listen to him. Three times, God said to Samuel, obey the voice of the people. And that word obey could also be translated something like, listen carefully, or heed, or take to heart what they're saying, and respond appropriately to it.

God said to Samuel, don't disregard what they're saying. Even though their motives are bad, listen to them. But the people didn't, and Samuel also listened to what God said in verse 7 through 9.

But the people didn't want to listen. Even though Samuel was a prophet who spoke God's word, even though Samuel was a trusted, wiser, older man who had shown his trustworthiness throughout his life over and over, even though his words were reasonable and sensible, they didn't want to hear it.

[17:24] And do you notice that after Samuel gave them all his warnings, what the people said in verse 19 and 20, they just repeated what they had said before. They said, no, there shall be a king over us.

They just become a broken record, and they keep repeating themselves and keep insisting on the same thing, louder and louder, over and over. Now the irony is, if you look at why they want a king, verse 19 and 20, they say, there shall be a king so that we may be like all the nations and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles.

But if you look back at chapter 7, they had done exactly the opposite. They hadn't followed the pattern of all the other nations who were worshipping idols.

They had served only the Lord. Chapter 7, verse 2. And then when they were attacked by the Philistines, it says, the Lord went out before them and the Lord fought on their behalf and delivered them from their enemies.

And then the Lord provided Samuel to judge them wisely. You see, God had done everything that they wanted this king to do. God had already done it in the past for them.

[18:49] And God was willing to do it again. But they said, no, we want a king. And they didn't want to listen. They didn't want to listen to Samuel.

They didn't want to listen to God. They just wanted to talk and repeat themselves over and over.

The Bible says there's wisdom in being quick to listen and slow to speak.

That's a question that all of us need to ask ourselves. Am I teachable? Will I listen and obey God's word even when it's not what I want to hear?

Will I listen to older, wiser, trusted people who have shown their trustworthiness? Will I stop and reconsider if one of them comes to me and says, I'm not sure what you're doing is the best course of action.

Are you open to reason? Or do you just dig in your heels and start repeating yourself over and over and louder and louder? So they demanded from Samuel instead of depending on God, they spoke but didn't listen.

[20:05] And the third thing, the third issue with their attitude was they latched onto a substitute instead of the source. Verse 8, the Lord said, ever since I brought them up out of Egypt, they've been forsaking me and serving other gods.

They're doing the same thing now. God had delivered them because they were slaves in Egypt and God had brought them out and set them free and provided for them.

And God says, what they've done in return is they've gone and latched on to these other things as substitutes for me.

And here, it was just the king. The king became their god. The office or the ideal of a king had become in their mind the answer to all of their problems.

They were just like the people back in chapter 4. A couple weeks ago we looked at chapter 4 when they were defeated by the Philistines in battle. They said, let's bring the ark here so that the ark of God can save us from our enemies.

[21 : 19] And God said, no. The ark is meant to be a symbol of my presence with you, a sign and a reminder that I'm with you, but the ark isn't a magic box.

I'm not in that magic box. And you can't put me in that box. And it's not going to work if you think that that box is going to protect you.

It can't replace who I am. And the people were doing the same thing here. They were latching on to not the ark but here a king as the answer to all their problems as a substitute for God.

Is there something that you really, really want? Like the people. That it's become a substitute for God in your heart or in your life.

Maybe you're constantly looking to be in a relationship. And if someone else questions you and says, is this really the right time for you to pursue that?

[22 : 32] Or, is that person really, is this really a healthy relationship or is it, has it become codependent? Or are you really pointing one another towards, God?

Or are you just sinking more deeply into each other? If people ask you those questions, you immediately become defensive and you say, no! I'm going to be in my relationship and don't you dare question me.

Or maybe all your energies are focused on getting into a certain grad school program or landing a fellowship or getting a certain kind of job.

And you think, once I get that, I'll have it made. And then I can worry about everything else in my life. But right now, that's what I'm focused on.

You know, the ladder just keeps going up and up. And you think you see the top and then you get there and you realize there's a bunch of people further up. And even when you get to the top, then you have to worry about how long can you stay there.

[23 : 34] and if that's the one thing, if that's the one thing that you focus all your life around, you can never be completely satisfied.

You can never be fully secure. No, none of these things are bad in themselves. Relationships are good. God meant us to be in community with each other.

God provided marriage as a good thing. God calls us to pursue friendships in all kinds of different ways. God gives us the opportunity to work.

That's a blessing from God. That's a good thing. It's worth pursuing. But when it becomes a substitute for God, when it becomes that one thing that defines you more than everything else, and that one thing that you're always thinking about, that's always in the back of your mind, and that's driving you, then it's become a substitute instead of the source.

And Samuel warned the people. Substitutes end in slavery. Samuel said, you think this king is going to fix all your problems, but you don't realize he's going to create all kinds of new problems that you haven't even thought of.

[24 : 54] Notice what he says about what the king's going to do. Verse 10 through 19. Verse 10 through 18. He said, a king will take, take, take, take.

He'll take your sons. He'll take your daughters. He'll take a 10% of your grain and the best of your fields and vineyards. He'll take from you and keep on taking.

And he says, finally, you'll be his slaves. You'll be just like it was all the way back in Egypt, except this time you chose it for yourselves.

others. And if a relationship or if work or whatever else, a good thing, if it becomes your God, it will just start to take and take and take and take until it leaves you dry and broken and you become a shell of who you once were.

you've come to that place. Maybe you've been there. Maybe you are there. You've latched on to something, hoping to find life in it, thinking this is what I really, really want, and you've got it.

[26 : 09] And you end up in slavery. Maybe you lose it. And you feel like you don't have anything. And you cry out and you wonder if anybody will hear you.

You know, there's good news in this passage. Samuel warned the people of what would happen. He warned them what you want isn't really what you need. You know, if you keep reading in the Bible, the good news is God doesn't just say no to them and leave it at that. He doesn't just give them what they want. Ultimately, God provides what we need. God told Samuel, listen, obey their voice and make them a king. Some ways it's surprising. With all the warnings about it, God seems to give in to their demand. But God had always planned to carry out his purposes through a king. And so God chose to work through their flawed and wrong motives for his ultimate good purposes. You know, sometimes God refuses to give us what we demand, what we want, out of his love for us.

[27 : 24] To protect us from getting entangled and enslaved in something that we latch onto too much. Sometimes God gives us what we ask for. He says, okay, this is what you want, I'll give it to you.

And then I'll show you that that's not really what you need. And it's not really what's going to satisfy you in the end. And I'll let you have it because you so deeply want it. I'll let you have it.

But in the end, I'll bring you to see that it's me that you really want. And it's me that you really need more than anything else. They got a king.

But you know what? Their hopes that the king would save them and do everything for them and fix all their problems were disappointed over and over. If you read the rest of the Old Testament, many of the kings failed.

They all fell short. They got what they wanted. And then they realized that what they wanted wasn't what would satisfy them deep down.

[28 : 31] But God didn't give up on them. And he doesn't give up on us. He always had a plan to give them what they really needed. And what they really needed was for the Lord himself to be their king.

Not a king like all the kings of all the other nations who would take and take and take but a king like God himself who would give and give and give.

And ultimately that's why God sent his one and only son Jesus Christ into the world. Not to come to us and take and take and take and demand but to give and give and give.

all the way to the end. Jesus said the son of man referring to himself came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

as we sung as we sung about how Jesus paid it all how he laid down his life on the cross he gave himself for us that's the kind of king that we really want that we really need a king a leader who deserves our full loyalty and allegiance who is sacrificially committed to us even to the point of giving up his own life.

[30 : 04] That's what Jesus did. That's why he deserves our full loyalty and our full allegiance more than anything else because he's the source. He's not a substitute that's going to end up in slavery.

He's the source who gives us life. tonight we're going to celebrate what we call communion which is simply reminding us of the sacrifice that Jesus made how he gave his life for us so that everyone who turns to him and trusts in him and says Jesus I want you to be my king the promise is that everyone who does that receives forgiveness of all of our sins and life now and forever with God.

So that's what we come to celebrate and remember that God provided for us what we really really needed and he doesn't always give us what we think we want but he does give us what we need.

So as we prepare to do that let's pray. Lord our hearts are often fickle we want all kinds of things and we think we know what we need but often Lord we are so short sighted and we see all of the potential and none of the danger and we latch on to good things that you've made good gifts from you but we neglect you.

Lord forgive us. I pray that we would listen to you and receive from you and trust in you with all our hearts.

[32 : 08] Thank you Lord that you're a king like nobody else. Lord you didn't come to take and take and take because you already had everything.

Everything was already yours. You came to give. You came to give your life for us and we thank you for that. Help us be shaped by what you've done for us.

In Jesus name we pray. Amen.