

**“Give Us A King”**

**September 18, 2016**

**1 Samuel 8:1-22**

**SI:** We’re studying the book of 1 Samuel which is the early history of Israel. But it’s not ordinary history, it’s redemptive history.

This is about God working in history to prepare a people out of whom would come the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ.

In 1 Corinthians Paul says that the things in the Old Testament happened as examples and were written down as warnings to us— those of us living after the coming of Christ.

So this history is full of spiritual truths and faith lessons for us.

**INTRO:** I've told you before about something that happened to me the summer after I graduated from college.

I had a teaching job lined up for the fall, but I needed something that summer so I found some temp work at the Palm Beach Co. Courthouse.

My job was to sort legal documents that came into the courthouse and get them to the right offices.

Near the end of the summer, they hired a retired man to take my place, and my boss told me to train him in sorting the mail.

I tried but he just couldn't get it. He kept putting stuff in the wrong place.

I was getting frustrated and my face apparently showed my irritation.

Next thing I knew, my boss called me into her office.

She was a tough gal from New Jersey.

She always wore a cocktail dress and high heels to work.

So she called me into her office—and that was the good old days when you could smoke inside—so she lit up a Virginia Slim and took a drag.

Then she said: You're going to be a school teacher in a few weeks.

How the blank do you think you're going to be a teacher if you aren't patient?

I tried to say something to defend myself but she cut me off.

I want you to respect that old man and teach him how to do the job.

Now get out of here.

I was humiliated.

Here I was, the Christian, soon to be Christian school teacher—and the real me was exposed—

my impatience and disrespect were dragged right out into the open and named.

She nailed me and I had no excuses and nowhere to hide.

That's what the Bible does.

The Bible is not just a revelation of God, it's a revelation of us.

It reveals not only who God is but who we are too—it exposes us.

This chapter, 1 Samuel 8, is particularly penetrating and incisive.

It makes us face some things about ourselves that are hard to admit.

We're the Israelites in this chapter. We're the people clamoring for a king.

Samuel is speaking to us.

And the same spiritual pathologies he was exposing in the Israelites are at play in our hearts.

You might argue that this was one of the biggest sins the Israelites ever committed.

God says that in demanding a king, Israel was rejecting him.  
But this passage is not all negative.

God gave them what they wanted.

He gave them their sinful demand.

God does that sometimes. He just says: Ok. I'll give you what you want.

And we suffer the consequences.

As we progress in 1 Samuel, we'll see some bad things happened as a result.

But our God is a redeemer.

In his sovereign grace he takes even our sins

and uses them to accomplish his greater purposes.

Ultimately God used their sinful demand for a king

and made something wonderful out of it.

He still works that way.

So here's how we'll study the passage—two phases.

1. First, we'll see how it exposes three big sins—sins we all commit.
2. Second, we'll see how it reveals God's greater redemption—greater than all sins.

Credit where credit is due, chapter in Dale Ralph Davis' commentary on 1 Sam,  
Robert Rayburn's sermon on this chapter.

## **MP#1 The three big sins this passage exposes.**

### **Our addiction to substitutes—substitutes for God.**

The elders of Israel demanded that Samuel give them a king.

Samuel was upset with this request but the Lord told him:

It's not you they have rejected, they've rejected me from being king over them. The Lord says they've done this from the day I brought them out of Egypt—they've abandoned me and served other gods. That's what they are doing now. So their demand for a king was actually a demand for a substitute god—it was a form of idolatry.

Why was this idolatry? What was wrong with wanting a king?

We aren't told why explicitly in this passage.

But if we read ahead to chapter 12, there we get the rest of the story. We learn that there was another military threat the Israelites were facing. The Lord had brought about an amazing victory over the Philistines. Then another military threat came, this time from Ammonites.

But instead of saying: Remember what happened when we prayed and trusted God, and how he totally crushed the Philistines?

And remember how he did the same thing for our ancestors when they were slaves in Egypt, how they cried out to him and he destroyed the Egyptians?

And remember how over and over again whenever we Israelites would forget God and get into trouble and be oppressed by enemies—every single time we repented and asked for his help, he always answered and sent us a deliverer?

Instead of saying any of that they said:

We need to get a king like other nations.

That's going to be our permanent solution to this problem.

We're not going to have to worry about any more threats if we have a king.

Their first trust was not in the Lord but in a new form of government.

Remember back in chapter 4 when they took the ark of the covenant into battle?

They were trusting a religious object for security instead of God.

Here they are trusting politics for security instead of God.

It's just a more sophisticated form of idolatry.

The problem was not having a king, it was not even wanting a king to provide consistent leadership for the nation—it was trusting a king for things they should have relied on the Lord to provide for them.

We can fix this thing and secure our future through this political plan.

Related to that, did you notice the Israelites' good argument for needing a king?

Samuel was getting old, his sons, unfortunately, were rascals like Eli's sons. Israelites said: We don't want to be stuck with them. It makes perfect sense to choose a king instead. Of course it makes sense. It's logical. It's reasonable. And it's a replacement for God.

What is your first impulse when problems come? Where first go for solutions? Is your first thought a financial solution, legal solution, expertise solution. Nothing wrong with those per se, but they are often our God substitutes.

I have ingrained tendency to assess problems mechanically rather than spiritually—my problems, other people's problems, church problems. I automatically think something is wrong with the technique, and that if we just make adjustments, or are more careful, or make a better plan, we can work it out. I almost never think first thing: We need to repent. We need to pray. We need to seek God. It's always for me. OK, what do we do? How fix it? Sometimes I'll even think the path so clear and logical, don't even need to pray. Idolatry can be so logically reasonable that it's extremely hard to detect.

Another big sin this passage exposes is . . .

### **Our aversion to holiness**

By an aversion to holiness I simply mean that we do not like to be different for God's sake. We would rather blend in.

Adrienne and Eliza complain that through their junior high years they felt like freaks and weirdoes because of how strict we were about TV watching. For one thing, we didn't have cable. So their friends would talk about this or that TV show and they would have absolutely nothing to add to the conversation. And then, the worst, I put the TV on a rolling stand and after they kids had watched a video, I would push it into a closet. So their friends would come over and look around and say: Where's your TV? The girls would have to say: Dad keeps the TV in the closet. They have years of psychotherapy ahead of them. By the way, I mostly did that to force them to become readers. But my point is it's unpleasant to feel different, especially in middle school.

There's a refrain that's repeated twice in the story.

First the elders of Israel say:

Give us a king to lead us such as other nations have.

Then after Samuel warns them what life will really be like under a king, the people all respond:

We want a king over us, then we will be like all the other nations.  
We want to be like other nations. We want to fit in. We want to be accepted.  
We want to be considered mainstream and with the times.  
We don't want to be known as those people directly governed by God.

But Israel was unique by definition.

There is only one nation in history who has been delivered from slavery  
as Israel was when God brought them out of Egypt with mighty miracles,  
and then was given laws and constitution directly by God from Mt. Sinai.  
And when the Lord gave Israel his law, one of his commandment was:

“Be different, because I, the Lord your God, am different.”

The usually translation says be holy instead of be different—but you get the point.  
That's what holiness is. It's to be supremely different. Uniquely set apart.

But there are times when we don't want to be different.

We were on vacation a few years ago eating in this little restaurant.

A man and a woman were working there and we thought they were married  
and made some comment about to him about his wife.

He immediately said: She's not my wife. We live together but she's not my wife.

I'm never getting married and on and on about what a bad idea marriage is—  
mostly because of his disastrous experiences. People nodding. Laughing.

And the thought came to my mind that I ought to just say:

No, marriage is good. God made marriage. It honors him, it honors women.

But I didn't. I made some excuse to myself—He wouldn't listen anyway.

As I thought about it later, though, I had to admit I wanted to fit in.

Be different as I the Lord your God am different.

Different definitions of success. Different expectations for our children.

Different views of money and of marriage and of sex and work and play.

Which we have because God is our King.

So not wanting to be different, or not acting different is making culture king.

The third big sin of ours that this passage exposes is

### **Our immunity to wisdom**

The Lord told Samuel, Warn them solemnly and let them know  
what the king who will reign over them will do.

So Samuel spells it out. And he doesn't tell them what bad kings do.

He just tells them what ordinary kings do. Four times uses same verb—take.

He'll take your sons—charioteers, horsemen, soldiers, plow his ground, weapons.

Your daughters won't stay home either—take as perfumers, bakers, cooks.

He'll also take your best fields, vineyards, olive groves for his attendants.  
And have you ever heard of this thing called taxes?

He's going to take a tenth of your produce, and your servants, your cattle.  
Some day you're going to feel like slaves—what you want will enslave you.

But verse 19 says the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel.

No, they said, we want a king over us.

Which reminds us that information and education does not itself change a person  
or even empower a person to change.

Our society has not learned this. One of the usual answers to social ills is that  
we must spend more to educate people about the harmful effect of this or that.  
It's the education fallacy. If people only know something will destroy them,  
then they will leave it alone. But it doesn't reckon on our sin nature.

Education can clarify, but it cannot transform.

It's also true in the church.

Israel hears God's wisdom from Samuel but does not submit.

We've all seen it. We've all done it.

Godly, biblical wisdom and counsel is given and promptly ignored.

A fool is right in his own eyes, says the book of Proverbs.

Which should lead us to ask for a soft heart and a teachable spirit and to be  
preserved from the arrogance of our stupidity.

So that's 1 Samuel 8. It's a New Jersey boss calling you on the carpet.

It exposes you. It exposes me.

How easily we misplace our trust,

how ashamed we are to be different,

and how resistant we are to any word that does not agree with our opinion.

And if we listen to this chapter and heed it, then it will save us a lot of heartache.

But we often don't. So what happens then? Does God just abandon us in our sins?

No he doesn't. Which brings us to the second big point . . .

## **MP#2 God's great redemption**

Israel was wrong to demand a king. That's clear.

But let me throw something else into the mix.

Try to imagine what the story of the Bible and the Christian faith would be like  
if Jesus was not our King. You can't.

The kingship of Jesus Christ is woven so tightly into salvation that if you  
tried to remove it, the whole thing would unravel.

We can't conceive of knowing Jesus apart from knowing him as our King.

His kingship is one of our greatest joys as his people.

At Christmas we sing about the King born in a stable.

At Easter we worship the King who rode a donkey and not war horse,  
the King who laid down his life for his people and who then defeated death.  
And every day we pray to the King who is at God's right and  
who is coming again to set all things right.

Why do we have this wonderfully rich and compelling way of knowing  
and worshipping and following Jesus as our King?

I'll tell you why. Because here's what God did.

He took Israel's sinful request for a king and he granted it.

He told Samuel, Listen to them and give them a king.

In time, all the things Samuel warned them about happened.

Israel suffered for her decision. Suffered under many bad kings.

But God didn't leave it at that.

He sovereignly worked in history to make the kingship of Israel  
a preview and foreshadowing of his Messiah.

And then when the time was right, he brought into this world a male child  
from the line of King David—that child was King of kings, ruler of nations.

God not only overcame his people's sins.

He even used this particular sin of Israel to be a means of grace for the world.

The Lord still works this way.

I love Covenant College. It's my alma mater. It's Allison's alma mater.

My three children have gone there.

Whenever I get to visit, I'm amazed at how it has grown and matured as an  
institution even from the time we were there. The beauty of the place,  
The excellent faculty. The thoughtful, Christian scholarship.

Adrienne and Eliza have not only gotten an excellent education,  
they've matured as Christians and their sense of calling has deepened.

I hope the same for Will.

But guess what? Covenant College was born out of a sinful church fight  
in a small Presbyterian denomination.

One well-known Covenant College alum called the fight

“an unseemly, disgusting little squabble over some ethical questions” during which “things  
were said and done that should never have been said and done in a Christian church.”

But out of that and other circumstances, Covenant College came to be.

And by God's great redemption, it's been a blessing to many.

Since I'm picking on Presbyterians, there's a large PCA church in Southern city,  
I won't mention the name of the church.

It started in the 1960s by a group of people who got mad at their Session,  
and who left to start another Presbyterian church.

They got mad because the Session publically stated that the church doors  
were open to people of all races. This was during the civil rights era.

These members said, We're not putting up with that.

Possibility of black people in church with us. So they left. Started their own.  
Horrible. Guess what? God redeemed that sinful beginning.

He used that church as a vehicle for the Gospel anyway.

And in time he actually moved the congregation to publically repent and ask  
forgiveness from black churches and black believers in their city.

Joseph's brothers were so cruel and jealous they sold him into slavery.

God redeemed that horrible act and actually used it to save them,  
and save all Israel by putting Joseph in Egypt at just the right time.

David killed a marriage and killed a husband. God redeemed his marriage to  
Bathsheba and enabled them to have a son was a progenitor of the Lord Jesus.

And as we have seen here, it was Samuel's screwed up home and bad parenting of  
his boys that gave Israel the excuse to sinfully demand a king—  
and that led to the royal house of Israel and King David and King Jesus.

Our God is a redeemer. He has woven it into the fabric of salvation history.

And ultimately, the greatest sin ever committed, the murder of the Prince of Life,  
God used to bring salvation to the world.

This is wonderful doctrine and it's also dangerous.

It has to be handled reverently and carefully.

You absolutely cannot use this to give yourself an excuse to sin  
or to be indifferent to God's law or not obey him.

You can't say that if God uses my sins to bring good things to pass,  
then really my sins aren't all that bad. That can take you straight to hell.

But here's what you can say:

God's purposes in the world will never be frustrated by sin,  
not even the sins of his own people.

And when God says in Romans 8:28 that he works all things together for good,  
that all things includes even my sins.

We could elaborate on the many ways God does this, but here's just one way.

If God had perfectly sanctified you the day you were justified—  
if he had made you sinless the day you were saved—  
Then you never would have really known  
and never would have really felt what a hopeless sinner you are,  
and what a patient and loving Savior you have in Jesus.

If I had been perfect, then I wouldn't have had the humiliation of my sins  
being pointed out by chain-smoking, cocktail dress-wearing, Yankee.  
And I wouldn't have stumbled out of there feeling like the worst Christian ever.

And I wouldn't have had pressed home to my soul once again  
that Jesus did not save me because I am better than anyone else,  
but because he alone is patient and loving and good.  
And that he calls me, every day, to confess my sins and follow him.