

## Samuel 8 - Samuel's Admonition

We have just begun to look at the reign of Saul but we are not quite through with Samuel just yet. Samuel's ministry will continue on in the context of the Saul's and David's kingdoms. Here, in 1Sam 11 and 12, we have the occasion for his last message to the nation of Israel.

Saul's reign got off to a rocky start and the people had what is called *buyer's remorse*. Today, consumers have limited protections when they are disappointed over something they bought and want to return it. As "goodly" as Saul was to look upon, Israel began to have some regrets right away. But, figuratively speaking, there was no returning the king and getting their money back.

Life is often like that. We make decisions and are stuck with the results. The message of Samuel to Israel was one of hope in the face of the new normal for the nation.

### 1. The testing of Saul -

- Oops!

There is an old comedy routine about what happens when a surgeon makes a mistake. There are some procedures where a patient is sedated but not completely anesthetized. The doctor calls for scalpels, retractors, sutures...but what would you think if the next thing you heard was "Oops"? When a cook says "Oops" he might just throw some sugar in the recipe to cover up the problem. When a mechanic says "Oops" he goes out and buys a replacement part. When a bricklayer says "Oops" he tosses a brick aside to try to use later and picks up a new brick. When a surgeon says "Oops", you want to know what that means. You don't want to hear him say, "Oh, you can live without a spleen, don't worry." There have been patients who have had problems and found out the surgeon left a sponge inside them after surgery. It would be terrible to ask the doctor about this and have him throw up his hands, shrug his shoulders, and say, "Oops, that happens." This is kind of the case when Saul was brought forward and presented as the king.

At the end of 1Sam 10, we see that there was a mixed reaction to having Saul as king.

1Sam 10:26-27 And Saul also went home to Gibeah; and there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched.

27But the children of Belial said, How shall this man save us? And they despised him, and brought him no presents. But he held his peace.

We saw how that the people in general were rejecting God in favor of a king like the other nations had. After hearing from Samuel, there was a group, in vs. 26, who honestly responded to him. They are described as having their hearts touched by God. If they were to have a king, they wanted to do it the right way according to God.

Then there was another group, the children of Belial, the children of wickedness, or worthless and vain men. These despised Saul. They got a king but weren't happy even though they got what they wanted.

There was a question hanging in the air, "Oops! What have we done?" Saul held his peace and didn't respond to them as Samuel sent them all home.

- Saul's test

It wasn't long before Saul would be tested as the new king. In chapter 11, Nahash the Ammonite came up against Jabeshgilead. The men of Jabeshgilead tried to preempt an attack by offering to make a covenant to serve Nahash. Nahash agreed to it on the condition that they let him thrust out their right eyes. They asked for a reprieve to consider this and, in the meanwhile, they sent word to Saul. Saul rallied an army of 330,000 and slew the Ammonites. It was at this point Israel was ready to accept Saul as king.

1Sam 11:12-15 And the people said unto Samuel, Who *is* he that said, Shall Saul reign over us? bring the men, that we may put them to death.

13And Saul said, There shall not a man be put to death this day: for to day the LORD hath wrought salvation in Israel.

14Then said Samuel to the people, Come, and let us go to Gilgal, and renew the kingdom there.

15And all the people went to Gilgal; and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal; and there they sacrificed sacrifices of peace offerings before the LORD; and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.

The testing of Saul produced mixed results. You don't notice Saul calling upon God before going to battle. In the future, even in a rare moment when he did, he wasn't very diligent in seeking God. He did step up to the challenge of Nahash at that time. He also restrained the people from exercising revenge against the children of Belial. Samuel called the people together to confirm Saul as king.

## 2. The testing of Israel -

Samuel called Israel together to not only renew, or confirm, the kingdom, but to give an admonition. Saul passed his test, pretty much, but this was also a test for Israel. Israel was tested as to how they responded to God's work in this new kingdom. Before Samuel could deliver his challenge, he put Israel to the test and gave them an *F*. The purpose of spiritual tests is not to justify judgment, but to help people evaluate what they need to do to move forward.

- The justifying of Samuel

In testing Israel, Samuel set them up to be able to see that he was an unbiased observer. He had a reputation as a straight-shooter and didn't want them to get distracted by accusing him of hypocrisy. We can see how critical this is compared to our modern times. For example, Cat Stevens has been a very popular musician that some of us might remember. He converted to Islam but has a very unrealistic perspective about its prophet.

In a World where people are surrounded by darkness, ignorance and fear, it is a sign of hope to be celebrating Islam's message of peace and light, and the last great Messenger, born and chosen to deliver them to all mankind.

– Cat Stevens

Islam has always been a religion of violence. But, in our modern times, there are those who have tried to present a more enlightened perspective. They might have suggested that the violence we have witnessed is not representative of "true" Islam. Cat Stevens is part of that naive crowd. Maybe in another time they thought they could get away with this, but now since the terrorist massacre of Oct 7, 2023, and the manifestation of widespread anti-Semitic hatred and racist violence and protest, the reputation of the prophet of Islam can't be denied.

In his time, Samuel was able to justify the challenge he was going to make to Israel because of his Godly reputation.

1Sam 12:1-5 And Samuel said unto all Israel, Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that ye said unto me, and have made a king over you.

2And now, behold, the king walketh before you: and I am old and grayheaded; and, behold, my sons *are* with you: and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day.

3Behold, here I *am*: witness against me before the LORD, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received *any* bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you.

4And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought of any man's hand.

5And he said unto them, The LORD *is* witness against you, and his anointed *is* witness this day, that ye have not found ought in my hand. And they answered, *He is* witness.

Having established his "street cred," Samuel proceeded to call Israel to account.

- The convicting of Israel

Samuel reminded the Israelites of *their* reputation.

1Sam 12:8-13 When Jacob was come into Egypt, and your fathers cried unto the LORD, then the LORD sent Moses and Aaron, which brought forth your fathers out of Egypt, and made them dwell in this place.

9And when they forgat the LORD their God, he sold them into the hand of Sisera, captain of the host of Hazor, and into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab, and they fought against them.

10And they cried unto the LORD, and said, We have sinned, because we have forsaken the LORD, and have served Baalim and Ashtaroth: but now deliver us out of the hand of our enemies, and we will serve thee.

11And the LORD sent Jerubbaal, and Bedan, and Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and ye dwelled safe.

12And when ye saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, ye said unto me, Nay; but a king shall reign over us: when the LORD your God *was* your king.

13Now therefore behold the king whom ye have chosen, *and* whom ye have desired! and, behold, the LORD hath set a king over you.

Samuel described their history of rebellion and how it was *their* call to seek out a king. Samuel had never gone to them and said, "Hey, how about getting a king." God had not announced to them that they were ready for a king. They had been rebellious and were now getting a king of their rebellion. But, God is merciful and Samuel reminded them of that. Their failure would become an opportunity for them to do right.

### 3. Samuel's admonition -

There are some situations that we get into due to imprudence. Prudence is a specific kind of wisdom. Whenever you see *prudence* in the Bible it is talking about wisdom in *practical* matters. Prudence is properly *applied* wisdom. When we are imprudent, we have made choices that are not as good as others. Remember there was a way that Israel would get a king properly from God. Having a king was not a problem. What was a problem was Israel's imprudence in seeking after a king the way they did. Not all of *our* problems are due to sin. Some of them are due to imprudence (and possibly coupled with sin). Does that mean all is hopeless and we can't be blessed? No. Even in the Ten Commandments, God presents a hope to overcome the effects of sin.

Exod 20:5-6 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me;

Some people stop reading here and use this to teach *generational sin and judgment*. They think that the curse of the parents is passed on the next generation. But God puts a limit on even the effects of the iniquity of the fathers. Otherwise, if the children of the fourth generation inherited the guilt of the parents, why wouldn't the fourth generation's sin kick off a new cycle for the *next* four generations? In God's mercy, there is room for repentance and God provides an alternate path for those who repent that is far greater:

6And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

We can see this in the life of Mark in the New Testament. He had abandoned Paul on the mission field. His departure caused a rift between Paul and Barnabas when Barnabas wanted to bring Mark back on board. That is not the last you hear of Mark. He changed his course and you later see how Paul saw him as a blessing in the ministry.

2Tim 4:11 Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.

Whether we have been brought low because of sin or just commit ourselves imprudently and say "Oops!" all is not lost. This was Samuel's challenge. The people were committed to the new plan with a king. Samuel challenged them to learn their lesson and just apply themselves to serving the Lord *now*.

1Sam 12:14-15 If ye will fear the LORD, and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel

against the commandment of the LORD, then shall both ye and also the king that reigneth over you continue following the LORD your God:

15But if ye will not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall the hand of the LORD be against you, as *it was* against your fathers.

We shouldn't think that we can be complacent and assume that we can ignore serving God. Yes, the people acknowledged that they had gotten off track. God sent them a demonstration of His power as a sign.

1Sam 12:16-18 Now therefore stand and see this great thing, which the LORD will do before your eyes.

17Is *it* not wheat harvest to day? I will call unto the LORD, and he shall send thunder and rain; that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness *is* great, which ye have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking you a king.

18So Samuel called unto the LORD; and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day: and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel.

After God sent them this powerful sign to confirm Samuel's challenge, they affirmed their commitment to having learned their lesson.

1Sam 12:19 And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the LORD thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins *this* evil, to ask us a king.

Now Samuel was able to deliver his admonition.

1Sam 12:20-25 And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart;

21And turn ye not aside: for *then should ye go* after vain *things*, which cannot profit nor deliver; for they *are* vain.

22For the LORD will not forsake his people for his great name's sake: because it hath pleased the LORD to make you his people.

23Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way:

24Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great *things* he hath done for you.

25But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king.

Sometimes we bemoan the consequences of our decisions and the paths we have taken. It is not that we should *ignore* and *trivialize* our past. Recognize the past. Learn from the past. But, know that God wants us to be looking to Him no matter what state we are in. When life's circumstances change, life is not over.

Phil 4:10-13 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.

11Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content.

12I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

13I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

When Paul met with the Ephesian elders, he expressed his desire to go back to Jerusalem.

Acts 20:22-24 And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there:

23Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.

24But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

He felt bound in the spirit but did not expect, at that time, to end up being bound with ropes, taken into custody, put under guard, appear before Felix and Agrippa, nearly lost in a storm, and incarcerated in Rome. There was one principle that drove him:

Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Whatever your past decisions and present condition, you can turn your life over to Christ. Life only has meaning and fulfillment in Christ. The prize is the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Phil 3:13-14 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this* one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

14I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

We come to the point now where we must make our *new* decision. The old decisions have landed you where you are. The decision to give your life to Christ, let His blood be the only payment for your sin, and receive eternal life is set before you. You can have Christ as your Savior, today.

You might have done that already. But perhaps you have had regrets since then. Acknowledge the past, repent, and be ready to press on with a re-commitment to serving God. Don't keep a hold on the old things that have taken you down. Get ready to make changes that you can build on to press on to the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

1. The testing of Saul - 1Sam 10:26-27, 11:12-15
2. The testing of Israel - 1Sam 12:1-13
3. Samuel's admonition - Exod 20:5-6, 1Sam 12:14-25, Phil 4:10-13, Acts 20:22-24, Gal 2:20, Phil 3:13-14