

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

DHW Bible class

LESSON 5B

FIRST SAMUEL

CHAPTER 8

INTRODUCTION

Rejection is a very painful experience. All the more so when you have given your very best to the people and at the end of your life, they throw you out to pasture. This is very common in the world. The measure of a good worker is his ability to produce. If he stops producing, he is of no use and becomes an instant liability. The sad part is that we also see this in some churches and Christian homes. A pastor who has lived out his usefulness become “a hindrance to the ministry” and is summarily replaced. Some so-called Christian children have no qualms placing their aged and “troublesome” parents into old folks’ home because they do not wish to have their carefree lives encumbered by senile parents.

The saddest part is that this sort of attitude is based upon the desire to be like the world. The standards of the world have consumed the hearts of this new generation. No matter what reasons are used to try and open their eyes to their folly, they fall on deaf ears and hardened hearts. Their minds have been made up. They love the world and desire to conform to the image of the world no matter the costs. In this kind of rebellious environment, many times God allow his punitive will to take its course. The sinner will pay the price and a very heavy price indeed. The consequences will be life changing and once they set foot on this worldly road of disobedience there will be no turning back.

This was precisely what happened to Israel.

COMMENTARY

No Faithful Men—vv. 1-3

Samuel was old and his sons were put in charge of the southern-most city in Israel, Beersheba. They were evil and wicked, very much like the sons of Eli. Samuel was old but still the judge and prophet in his home town of Ramah. He travelled from his hometown of Ramah to Gilgal, then westward to Bethel, then south to Mizpeh before returning to Ramah. His itinerary trips to these cities did not cover the city of Beersheba, which is the southern-most part of Israel. He sent his sons, Joel (Yahweh is God) and Abijah (my Father is Yahweh) to act as judges in Beersheba, which was about 57 miles south of Ramah.

His sons, however, did not follow in his godly footsteps, both in terms of character and conduct. Samuel was a man of steadfastness, faultless integrity, perseverance and great humility. Logically, his two sons should be amply qualified to act as judges in Beersheba. Samuel sent both of them to the same city so that they could support each other. Sadly, Joel and Abijah both succumbed to temptations.¹ They took their work as an opportunity to make money. The love of money is the root of all evil. They accepted bribes and the result was a perversion of justice.

What a shame to the Name of God. The highest spiritual office in the Land of Promise had turned into a profession of filthy lucre. As Proverbs 28:21 says, “*To have respect of persons is not good: for for a piece of bread that man will transgress.*” Today’s pastors and full time workers must take heed never to follow in the footsteps of Joel

¹ 1 Chronicles 6:33 indicates that Joel had a son, Heman, who served in the Temple. In other words, Joel must have repented and raised a godly family.

and Abijah. When teachers of God's Word trade their God-ordained responsibility for filthy lucre, what kind of congregation will they breed?

The Israelites Asked for a King—vv. 4-6

The elders of Israel, on a united front, met Samuel in Ramah. They told Samuel that he was advancing in age. Does this mean that they think that Samuel was not competent to discharge his responsibility and duty? They pointed out that his sons were not walking in his ways. They were greedy, evil and corrupt. Joel's and Abijah's character and conduct could not be defended. They had definitely sinned and their acts could not be condoned. The people might have thought that Samuel would pass the office of prophet to his sons. Although it was a natural thing for all fathers to give their sons the best, it could not have been Samuel's intention. He knew all too well that a prophet of God had to be chosen by God.

The elders asked that Samuel appoint a king to judge over them "like all the nations" (8:5b). It was more of a demand than a request as there was no room for discussion on the matter.

Was it wrong to ask for a king? Was it wrong to have a king to rule over Israel? God had already prophesied that Israel would have a king one day. As far back as the time of Jacob in Genesis 49, God had already said that kings would come out of Judah.² Guidelines on kingship were also given in the days of Moses before Israel entered the Promised Land. What was wrong was that Israel wanted a king "like all the nations." The reason was a worldly one. The desire was to be like the nations all around them which had been very

²Genesis 49:10, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."

successful in managing their nations with kings to rule over them.

They have actually Rejected God—vv. 7-8

On hearing their demand, Samuel was displeased -- "the thing looked evil in his eyes." Samuel must have been shocked and deeply hurt. He had honestly and sacrificially served the people as God's representative judge for many years. And now all the elders told him that he was old, that his sons were immoral, and that they wanted a king to judge over them, like all the nations! Samuel prayed to the LORD. The LORD answered him and told him to accept the demand of the people for a king.

The LORD shared with Samuel His perspective on the matter. The people had rejected the LORD, and not him, Samuel. Up to this point in the history of Israel, the LORD had been their King. Israel was ruled by a theocracy. Now the people wanted a monarchy. God ruled Israel as their King through His representative. But now the people wanted a king like all the other nations. If Samuel had been serving himself instead of God, then the people would be really rejecting him. But the LORD said that the people had not rejected Samuel but God HIMSELF because Samuel had been serving God faithfully and pointing the people to Him.

Their request was not wrong in itself because there was nothing wrong with having a king. God had planned for a king to rule over them. The problem was in their desire to be like the nations around them. The people should have sought the will of God and find out when He will give them a king. They should wait for the LORD to raise an earthly king.³ They should have exercise

³ Deuteronomy 17:14, "When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me; 15 Thou shalt in any wise set *him* king over thee,

patience. The LORD pointed out that Israel had been unfaithful and ungrateful since the day that they were brought out of Egypt. They had forsaken the LORD and had served other gods. The LORD told Samuel to accede to their demand but to protest solemnly to them and to reveal to them the atrocities they would suffer under their chosen king.

The Consequences of Kingship—vv. 9-18

Samuel did as the LORD had commanded. He told the people the price they would have to pay. First, their sons and daughters would be taken away from them. The sons would be conscripted to become soldiers for the army, some on chariots, some as horsemen and others as foot-soldiers forming a column before the king's chariots. Their daughters would have to work in the army; to serve as cooks in his kitchen and bakery; to work in the fields, vineyards and olive-yards; and the best of them would be taken and given to his favourites. Second, the king would tax a tenth of their produce and give them to his servants and officers. Third, the king would take their male and female servants, the best of their young men and their beasts for his

whom the LORD thy God shall choose: *one* from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which *is* not thy brother. 16 But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way. 17 Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold. 18 And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of *that which is* before the priests the Levites: 19 And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: 20 That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, *to* the right hand, or *to* the left: to the end that he may prolong *his* days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel."

work. He would tax a tenth of their sheep and give them to his servants. The imposition would be so great that they would cry out. Observe that the king they chose would take from them – a taking-king, whereas the true King, our LORD God, gives to His people – a giving-King. What a contrast! Samuel intimated that they would regret their decision to have their own king. And in the day that they cry to the LORD, He would not hear them. The situation would be irreversible.

The Israelites Insisted on a King—vv. 19-22

In spite of the warnings, the people refused to accept Samuel's counsel. They were very stubborn. They insisted on having a king to rule over them. They told Samuel that it was their desire to be like all the other nations. They wanted a king to judge over them, to lead them and to fight battles for them. They had forgotten the testimonies of their forefathers -- how the LORD had delivered them from their enemies in the past. The power of the attractions of the world could be seen in this chapter. The people cared not for Samuel's feelings. It did not change their minds at all. The people were not interested in the "inconveniences" that would come with having a king as they cared only to be like all the nations.

Samuel patiently listened to their words and then went to the LORD in prayer. He repeated all that the people had said. And the LORD answered Samuel, "Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king" (8:22a). After his talk with the LORD, Samuel told the men of Israel to return to their respective cities. The punitive will of God set in. It had become a road of no return. The days of theocratic rule were over. The monarchy had begun in Israel.

PRACTICAL VALUE

Samuel suffered the greatest hurt here. He was rejected by the same

people whom he had served since he was a young lad. They told him that he was old implying that he was out-of-date. The pain he felt in his heart must have been deep but his example in the face of such rejection and humiliation is worthy of our consideration. Samuel went to the LORD first. He did not get angry nor did he reprimand them. He told the LORD about what had happened. The LORD comforted and encouraged him to carry on the good work. The LORD stayed on his side.

The people were warned of the price that they had to pay for choosing their own king to rule over them instead of the LORD God but they insisted on having their way. They could have waited and let God choose the appointed time but they were stubborn. God gave them what they wanted but they subsequently suffered for their decision. God's way is always the best. Let us wait upon the LORD.

AMEN.

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

Monday: 1 Samuel 8:1-8.

Tuesday: 1 Samuel 8:9-22.

Wednesday: 1 Samuel 8:1-22.

Thursday: 1 Samuel 8:1-22.

Friday: 1 Samuel 8:1-22.

1 Samuel 8:19-22	
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Analysis

Text	Practical Value
1 Samuel 8:1-3	
1 Samuel 8:4-6	
1 Samuel 8:7-8	
1 Samuel 8:9-18	

Discussion Questions

1. Should the “old pastor” stay in power or should the congregation oust him since he has outlived his usefulness?

2. When you are rejected by your own people, how should you respond in a godly manner? For example, you stood for election and was not elected.

3. Why did God grant their request for a king when He knew that the people had sinned?

4. Was Samuel's initial response to the rejection right or wrong?

5. What can you say about Samuel's life and ministry as described in chapters 7-8?
