



Scott Turansky, Senior Pastor
November 20, 2016

1 SAMUEL 8

1 Samuel Series

We are continuing our study in the book of 1 Samuel this morning. You can open there to chapter 8. Let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Lord, we want to thank you for this day. We don't know what this day will bring for each one of us as individuals and that's why we want to thank you for it in advance. We know that even though we don't know what's going to happen on this day, we know you and you do know what's going to happen and you hold all of these activities, events, and circumstances in your own hands. So we trust you and ask that you would be working in our lives, that you would bless us and that you'd use the interruptions to our expectations today to provide us opportunities to hear from you better. We pray, Lord, that you would teach us through other people, through experiences, that you would guide us as we walk with you. It's for that reason that we thank you for this day. Now, Lord, as we open your word we ask that you would teach us from it and that you would use this time as we do look at your word to sharpen us as spiritual servants for you. We want to be used. We want to be humble before you and we want you to speak into our lives this morning. So we ask that you would do that in 1 Samuel 8 now. In Jesus' name, amen.

If we were going to create some kind of a report card on the Christian life, it would contain things like how do you handle your finances, how are you doing with your emotions. It would contain different parts of our experience with God. I think that one of those things that it would measure is how are we doing at decision-making the choices that we make every day. We all make lots of choices every day. We make decisions every day and those choices and decisions can have the Lord and can be run independently. But it's when we have the Lord working in our lives that calls it this process of walking with Him. We walk with the Lord. The idea is we take each step and as we're taking those steps and making those choices and decisions, that we're doing it in a way that's connected to God and with His gait. A gait is the way you walk. So we're with Him and we're following along.

Now today we're going to look at some issues with decision-making. We're going to see two decisions that were made and they're in contrast. One is using a very humanistic model and the other is using a more biblical model, but they're both done by people who are servants of the Lord. So even Christians can get into a humanistic model about making decisions. I want you to see that in this passage.

So if we look at a way of making decisions in life, this is a typical thing you would find if you google "how do you make decisions." You would find this because this is how people make decisions often. They identify the problem. They gather the facts and the alternatives. They

weight out the outcomes or the pros and cons. And then they make a decision and monitor the results. That's how people make decisions.

This is nothing new. You've seen this, especially if you're in business and trying to make decisions. But let's compare that or add to it the way we make decisions based on a godly model. Because when we add the godly model (which is in red there), we see the way we identify the problem.

What do we do? We go to prayer. We go down to the river. We spend time praying with God about that problem. Even if it's just a small problem or just an obstacle, we quickly shoot up a prayer – “Lord, help me deal with this today.” Secondly, we gather the facts and the alternatives, but we listen to the Lord.

See how a Christian is different? A Christian doesn't make decisions humanistically. He's listening to the Lord. We weigh out the outcomes and the pros and cons, but we're asking the question, “What is God doing in this situation?” We make the decision and monitor the results, but we're following God's leadership empowered by the Spirit.

Now I want to go back to that first model that I showed you that didn't have the red part in it. Do you know when I designed the slide the letters are there, but you can't see them because they're white letters on a white background. I put it all together and then made them red. I was thinking that's just how it is in life. The opportunities that we have as Christians are there in the decision model, we just have to enliven them. We have to look at them and see what they are because if we started doing it God's way, it enriches our life, it reduces our anxiety, it gives us greater wisdom. Amazing things happen in the midst of that.

Keeping this in mind, I've now shown you two different models of decision-making. A worldly one that is very humanistic and logical, and a godly one that is spiritual. We're going to have two decisions made in our passage in 1 Samuel 8 all made by believers. But one group of believers does it very humanistically and another does it in a spiritual way. Before we can get to that we have to see what the problems are. So open to 1 Samuel 8.

Verse 1 says – *When Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons as Israel's leaders. The name of his firstborn was Joel and the name of his second was Abijah, and they served at Beersheba. But his sons did not follow his ways. They turned aside after dishonest gain and accepted bribes and perverted justice.*

It's a sad story here that these young men didn't follow in their father's ways. Now we already saw this in the story of Eli earlier how Eli had sons who took advantage of the priesthood and engaged in immorality and God judged them. It seems though that Eli was judged, if you remember, because he didn't do his parental duty and stop them from doing what they shouldn't be doing. So Eli was judged in that case. But in this passage it seems different than that. Notice it says there *his sons did not follow his ways*. In other words Samuel was doing the right thing, but his sons did not choose to do the right thing with him. They failed him. It doesn't appear that Samuel failed his boys. It seems like they failed him. They didn't walk in his ways.

I would just want to suggest that raising children isn't like baking cookies. It's challenging and we can't blame the parents all the time for the choices the young people make. In other words Samuel was walking in the right way. His children chose to do something different and they are held accountable for that decision that they make. They made a conscious decision to take the position that they had and they found financial opportunity in bending the truth.

There's often financial opportunity in bending the truth. You can lie whether it's your taxes, or decision you're making at work, or an expense report, or even if you're in dispute about a product on Amazon.com. You can lie and it can result in financial gain.

They're taking advantage of that because they were set up as judges in these other places and they would make decisions for the people, but they would take bribes and the bribes would pervert their justice being done. So they made a significant error and it was causing problems for the people in general.

I just want to suggest to you that there are three common areas that we see in God's word where people get themselves into trouble in life. These are major temptations and we have to consider them each one because I think all of us are faced with these and we have to ask how am I doing in each of these. If you have a plan for each of these you will be well on your way to godliness, I would suggest, if you're relying on God to work within you in this way.

Materialism is that idea of focusing on success or money or worrying about the future. If you have a temptation in that area then you may be consumed by those things and it distracts you from your spiritual walk and can lead, of course, in this case to dishonesty, as we saw in these men.

A second area is immorality. That's going outside of God's design for sex in one way or another. It could be pornography, it could be immorality, or whatever. Immorality is one of those areas.

The third one is anger – not processing hurt in a way that God would design for our hurts. If we've got some hurt from the past that we're holding onto, it gets in the way. If you don't deal with it, it comes out in some crazy way.

So here's these servants out there being judges and they give in to this dishonesty, this materialism and get themselves in trouble. Now it's a problem because the leadership in the country were not happy with this. They want something different. The leaders are going to come and challenge Samuel about this and this is where we're going to find the first problem that needs to be solved. It's the leaders. Put yourself in the place of the leaders now. The leaders are coming with a problem and they're going to confront Samuel with this problem. It's a real problem. It's not an imaginary problem. The real problem is that there are some justices that are doing the wrong thing and they need to be challenged. They're coming to address this.

I would suggest as they come they're going to make some errors in their approach to Samuel and errors in their thinking. That's going to contribute to just looking at this from a worldly perspective. So let's try to understand what they're doing and then in the midst of this we'll find

application for ourselves, I think, to embrace God in our decision-making, all those choices that we make every day.

Read on starting in verse 4. It says – *So all the elders of Israel* (these are the leaders of the Israelite community) *gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah* (which is Samuel’s home). *They said to him, “You are old, and your sons do not follow your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have.”*

So this delegation comes together and they confront Samuel with a solution. In other words they’ve got a problem, they’ve got justices that are doing the wrong thing, and they come to Samuel with the solution. I would suggest that the solution doesn’t take into account God’s plan and God’s way of solving problems, so they find themselves in trouble. I’m going to suggest they’re going to make two errors here.

The first error that I think we often make in decision-making that prevents them from going to God for solutions is the error that says I’m out of time. This is urgent. I need to solve this problem now. When we start thinking things are urgent and we start solving them now, then we get into trouble. Parents who see a problem with their child and just step in and do something without thinking, we call that reactive parenting. Instead of strategic parenting, they’re just reacting to situations.

In a marriage relationship let’s say your husband does something you don’t like or isn’t what you would expect, you can look at that and say, “Oh. He doesn’t love me.” We jump to that conclusion very quickly. “She doesn’t love me. If she loved me, she wouldn’t do it this way,” or “If he loved me, he wouldn’t do it this way.” So we make these quick decisions, we start having a challenge with this, and it enters into conflict.

When it comes to general decision-making we end up making bad choices or at least choices that aren’t the best. We say, “I’m fed up. Anything is better than what we have now.”

I just want to suggest this: Sometimes a good solution is the enemy of the best solution. If we just follow a worldly model we might come to a good solution, but if we follow a godly model, we’ll come to a best solution that God would have for us, which involves praying, getting advice, seeking God.

See, these guys don’t come to Samuel and try to confront him or confront his sons even. They just ask him to come in and “give us a king,” they said. Look at verse 5. *They said to him, “You are old, and your sons do not follow your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have.”* In other words we’re tired of you, we don’t want you, we don’t want your boys. We want a king. So these guys come with a problem. They come and challenge Samuel. It doesn’t look like they’re following any godly model, so they end up in a place that they shouldn’t be, I would suggest.

If we look at the last phrase in verse 5 it says *such as all the other nations have*. I would say that their second error that they made is we want to be like everyone else, we want to be like the world. When we’re trying to be like the world we end up changing, like we talked last week. We

end up changing into something that's different. We're conformed to the world. It's a dangerous place to be when we try to be like everyone else around us. Especially when we're in a world like we are where the values of our world are continually moving away from God's standard. So they make these two significant mistakes and when they do they end up in a place where they're making a decision and they act rashly under the pressure. This now solution ends up not being the best solution.

Here's another statement that I have found helpful as I try to evaluate this model of decision-making is that Satan often presents his best before the Lord presents His best. Just think about Abraham. Abraham was promised a son, so Abraham comes up with an idea. His idea is he's going to take Hagar as his handmaid and have a child with her to help God out. In other words, Satan would love to get us distracted from the most important thing – that Isaac is coming. He's a beautiful promise that I have for you. So if we get distracted and we go the wrong direction we end up with the problem.

So that's these first leaders. I think they're making a worldly approach to their decision-making and in doing so they end up in a place where God doesn't really want them to be.

But it's fascinating to me in the passage how God's going to work with them in the midst of their immaturity and He's going to give them what we want. Before we get there, let's compare that to Samuel. I want you to follow along with this path because the path of decision-making and adding the spiritual components comes from my understanding of this passage. So I tried to go through what did Samuel do that was different as he was facing a problem.

So now move to another side of the table. Go to the part where Samuel now is looking at the leaders. He's got a problem. You see the problem is different for him. He's got leaders coming to him asking for his resignation and for a king to get on board. Let's read about how Samuel deals with his problem.

Verse 6 – *But when they said, "Give us a king to lead us," this displeased Samuel (in other words, I have a problem. So what did he do?); so he prayed to the Lord. I just love that. Here's a man taking a different path in decision-making that involves the Lord's work in his life. And the Lord told him: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you. Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will claim as his rights."*

It's just a real practical application for us who are leaders. When someone comes at us and they've got a problem, it's very easy for us to take it personally. When we start taking it personally we become defensive. But notice God's instruction is we just need to listen to them. God is saying, "I know they're wrong, just listen to them. I just want you to know their problem isn't really with you, so don't take it personally. The problem is with me. Care for these people. Don't take it personally. This isn't about you."

Sometimes when parents are working with their kids they take it personally. Then they start getting upset about “oh this isn’t about you doing the wrong thing. Now you’ve embarrassed me,” or something along that line. Then we start missing some important truths or opportunities we have as we’re working with that child. Or if a friend doesn’t answer a text, you start going down this path in your mind, “Oh he doesn’t like me,” or something like that. We start jumping to conclusions and taking it personally.

God is telling Samuel, “This isn’t about you. This is about me.” It’s the same thing that Jesus said to us when He said in the New Testament, *“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.”*

If you’re witnessing to someone and you get rejected, you can’t take it personally. It’s not about you. It’s about a person being confronted with the reality of God and His desire to be present in their lives, and someone feeling uncomfortable with that. So they take it out on the messenger.

So what God is telling Samuel is don’t take it personally. It’s not about you. Samuel could have said, “Okay. If you don’t want me around, fine. You guys go to your place; I’ll go to my place. We’ll be fine.” But he essentially says, “Look. If you don’t want me, I’m sorry, but I’m still going to pray for you. If you don’t want me, that’s okay, but I’m still willing to minister to you. You don’t want me? I’m sorry you feel that way. If I notice you’re doing something that’s hurting you, I’m going to tell you about it. I’m not going to take it personally. I’m just a servant as to what God wants me to be. I’m going to do whatever I can to make sure you’re the best person that God can make you to be.” So Samuel determined to not take this personally. I like that.

If we go back to the leaders now we see the deeper issue inside of them as they’re making a decision. They’re really rejecting God. Instead of living in community, they’re saying, “I don’t like what’s happening here, so I’m going to blame God for it and I’m going to take control.” When we start taking control in decision-making instead of allowing God to be in control and guide through the situation, we end up in a place that’s not the best. So they’re saying, “We want to put our confidence in a human leader and not in you. We don’t believe your ways are good enough.”

God appeals to them to Samuel and He’s saying, “Look. They’ve done this to me all the time.” If we go back in Numbers where they’re wandering around in the wilderness, it says this: *And they said to each other, “We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt.”* This isn’t new information. They’re rejecting the leader as we go forward. They’re chanting to Samuel twice, both in verse 5 (as we’ve already seen) and we’ll see it again in verse 20 – *we want to be like the other nations*. It’s always dangerous when we start thinking in our decision-making that the world has a good idea here, let’s do it that way. Very dangerous.

Let’s go on to verse 10. *Samuel told all the words of the Lord to the people who were asking him for a king. He said, “This is what the king who will reign over you will claim as his rights.”*

If you go back to the model of decision-making, remember evaluating the pros and cons. But I'm suggesting that in a Christian worldview or in a godly worldview we're asking the question, what is God doing here? That's the question we're asking. So Samuel is going to help them evaluate the pros and cons as we go through the passage, and I would say that this is a good description of the downside of any kind of government.

Notice what it says. *“He will take your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses, and they will run in front of his chariots. Some he will assign to be commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and others to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and still others to make weapons of war and equipment for 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 groves and give them to his attendants. He will take a tenth of your grain and of your vintage (that's like a tax) and give it to his officials and attendants. Your male and female servants and the best of your cattle and donkeys he will take for his own use. He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his slaves. When that day comes, you will cry out for relief from the king you have chosen, but the Lord will not answer you in that day.”*

So Samuel is warning them about the government. You want a government? Let me just help you understand that. Yeah, government will give you a physical presence of a leader, whereas now they were functioning under a theocracy where God was leading them through these prophets. Now we're going to move to this king and there's some disadvantages about that he's saying to them. So Samuel is warning them, but they don't want to hear it.

In verse 19 you'll see their response. *But the people refused to listen to Samuel. “No!” they said. “We want a king over us. Then we will be like all the other nations.”* What kind of reason is that? You want to be like everybody else? So if you're not married and you're dating someone and you say, “Hey, we're going to have sex because everybody is doing it,” well is that a good reason to have sex is because everybody is doing it? No. That's not a good reason. We don't want to be like everybody else where the divorce rate is 50% in our culture, where people are in damaged relationships continually. We want to live a life in a way that's pleasing to the Lord. That means we're different people. But these guys say we want to have a king like other nations. Verse 20 – *with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles.”*

Verse 21 – *When Samuel heard all that the people said, he repeated it before the Lord. The Lord answered, “Listen to them and give them a king.” Then Samuel said to the Israelites, “Everyone go back to your own town.”*

Wow. I suppose that maybe the greatest punishment that any of us could experience is when we get our prayers answered that aren't in line with what God would have for us. That's why it's so valuable for when we pray, “Lord, whatever is your will, do that.” Remember Jesus in the garden prayed, *“Lord, please take this cup from me. But not my will, but yours, be done.”*

Now we don't do that just to say, “Well God, if that's really not your will then I'll put up with whatever you want.” That's not what we say. We say, “Lord, it's your will that I want supremely and if I'm asking for something that's really in the desires of my heart and I'm bringing them before you and that's going to lead me in a path off of your will, I don't want it. I want your will.

That's what I want." That's not what these guys were doing. They're not seeking the Lord as in that final step of the decision-making process and then allowing God to work in their lives.

Psalm 106:15 (King James Version), I like the way this is described. It says in this verse – *And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.* That's not referring to this particular story. It's referring to the time they're wandering in the wilderness and complained and God gave them their request, but they had leanness in their soul. I don't want that. I don't want God to give me my request and leanness to my soul. I want God's will in my life.

In fact Psalm 106 is a really great passage, so I'm going to read only parts of this to you. It doesn't take place in this story. It takes place back in the same kind of situation when the Israelites wanted to go back to Egypt and they were complaining and whining to Moses. This psalm is reflecting on that experience. It's a great psalm that I think can conclude this message today because what it does is it reminds us that our hope needs to be in the Lord. We want to come before the Lord and choose Him. We don't want to be going down some other path that our hearts might be leading us towards.

So let me just read this passage from Psalm 106:41-48. *He gave them into the hands of the nations, and their foes ruled over them. Their enemies oppressed them and subjected them to their power. Many times he delivered them, but they were bent on rebellion and they wasted away in their sin. Yet he took note of their distress when he heard their cry; for their sake he remembered his covenant and out of his great love he relented. He caused all who held them captive to show them mercy. Save us, Lord our God, and gather us from the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name and glory in your praise. Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Let all the people say, "Amen!" Praise the Lord.*

I thought wow this would be a great time to sing that song, *Let the People Sing Amen*. We're not going to sing that one this morning, but it's a great song that we just say yes, amen.

Why? What's happening in this passage is these people continually did the wrong thing. They went back and they served other gods. But God was compassionate, as He is with us.

So if you've made some bad decision and haven't included God in the decision-making process, you need to see as in this passage that God wants to give you freedom. He wants to give you peace. He wants to give you back that close relationship with Him. All it means is that we come before Him and we say, "God, I don't want to be like the other nations. I want to serve you. I want you to be number one in my life. I want to give myself totally to you. Lord, I want you to be involved in everything that I'm doing," and God will do that. He will bless us.

There's a way to make decisions that involves the Lord in our lives. When we involve Him in that process, we're like Samuel. Samuel being used of God in a difficult situation, in a situation that neither Samuel or God was their first choice, but yet God is still working in the midst of that. That's just fascinating to me. God is using Samuel in this situation because Samuel is following a plan that's different than the world when it comes to decision-making, and that is to come to the Lord in every step of the process.

That's why we pray without ceasing. That doesn't mean we'll always have our hands folded and our eyes closed while we're driving or any other time. But it means that we're thinking about what He's doing and "How, Lord, can I serve you in everything that I do?" We want to be careful of demanding something that is not what is God's best that's offered to us. We want to come before God and say, "God, it's your will be done. I want to serve you. I want to do what you have for me in my life." Amen?