

1 Samuel 8:1-8 - Thursday, October 24th, 2013

- Back when we were in 1 Samuel 7 to now, as we pick it up in 1 Samuel 8, Samuel has become an old man in just the span of three weeks.
- It's for this reason that I think it would be good to have the backstory of what's taken place up to this point before we tackle chapter eight.
- Subsequent to the Philistines capturing the Ark, only to return it to the Israelites, Samuel, in about 20 years, brings Israel to repentance.

- After Israel laments to the Lord, and repents before the Lord, in turn, the Lord then grants them the victory over their enemy the Philistines.
- This victory, by God's hand, came under the leadership of Samuel who would end up judging Israel for the rest of his years, up until now.
- By that I mean; everything was going smashingly well up until Israel decides that they want to have a king to judge them like all the nations.

(1) Now it came to pass when Samuel was old that he made his sons judges over Israel. (2) The name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; *they were* judges in Beersheba. (3) But his sons did not walk in his ways; they turned aside after dishonest gain, took bribes, and perverted justice.

- What Samuel does here is questionable at best as it relates to many Bible commentators, some of whom are quite harsh towards Samuel.
- Some suggest Samuel's nepotism, in positioning his two sons' as judges may have been a sin on his part, yet others suggest otherwise.
- Namely, that he erred in his judgment and sort of repeated that which had been modeled for him, by Eli before him, with his two evil sons.

- I have to confess that as a father in the ministry with two sons I'm conflicted with respect to Samuel wanting his two sons to serve the Lord.
- Please know that I am in no way excusing what Samuel does here, rather, I'm explaining what Samuel does here, in that his heart is right.
- In other words, Samuel may have done the right thing in the wrong way and at the wrong time, such that his two sons had turned from God.

- If the truth be made known, this is why I'm not quick to jump on the bash Samuel bandwagon. Simply put, the text isn't clear about when.
- Let me explain, verses one and two tell us that Samuel made his sons judges, but verse three seems to indicate they were corrupt after.
- If that's the case, then the only fault and blame we can assign to Samuel is that of not having his sons step down, once they did turn away.

- Even then, I'm still not quick to come down too hard on Samuel because as a pastor, it is excruciatingly difficult to ask people to step down.
- No matter how gracious and loving you are, you'll always, without exception, be the bad guy who's really mean and harsh in how you did it.
- It doesn't seem to matter if you have the God given authority as a leader or pastor to ask someone to step down from a ministerial position.

- Over the last thirty years that I've walked with Jesus Christ, I've had the privilege of starting two businesses, and planting two churches.
- It's been my experience, that this dynamic is as understood in the arena of the secular, as it is misunderstood in the arena of the sacred.
- In other words, when I, as an employer, terminated an employee I had to just do it however, as a pastor, I don't dare terminate a volunteer.

- Again, I'm not excusing what Samuel did here, rather I'm explaining what Samuel did here, and as such, he's guilty of the sin of omission.
- More specifically, he's guilty of omitting not committing, such that it's more what he didn't do, namely, that of having his sons step down.
- Perhaps you'll indulge me for just a moment, as I think I'd be grossly remiss were I not to address what I call, "the why behind the what."

- Here's what I'm thinking, we need to shift our focus onto why it is that Samuel's two sons do what they do in turning away from the Lord.
- I'm of the belief it wasn't so much the fault of Samuel being a horrible father as much as it may have been that he was an absent father.
- Here's how I get there, Samuel was on the road a lot as a "circuit judge." Not only wasn't he around much, he needed his sons to help him.

Henry Morris - "Samuel was a 'circuit-riding' judge, with his main 'court' at Ramah, and the load apparently became so heavy that he assigned his sons to do his job at Beersheba, which was at the southern extremity of Israel. This proved a mistake; he should have waited for God to raise up any judge that was needed."

- This is why I see what Samuel did as a big mistake in the Lord, not a willful sin against the Lord. Again, it's right thing done the wrong way.
- There's something else I'd like to point out before we move on, and it has to do with Samuel's parenting, this because he's not off the hook.
- I would suggest that Samuel erred greatly in not making his family a priority, such that he sacrificed his sons on the altar of his serving God.

As one commentator so aptly said it, "In chapter 8, we see that Samuel was on this circuit, preaching from town to town, place to place. The circuit evidently took a toll on his family. Although we read that he built an altar at his house, it would seem that he was gone a lot. Yes, he was serving the Lord, caring for God's people but his top priority – his family – was not being instructed and tended. This can happen so easily in the ministry, in serving the Lord. It takes time to parent properly ...if you're involved in any type of ministry, the example of Samuel tells us we must be those who constantly pray for our kids. What a heartbreak it must have been for Samuel, as it must have been for Eli before him, to realize his own sons were not walking in the ways of the Lord. Samuel had a heart for God, a passion to serve God. He was a good man, a great man, a godly man – but he was evidently gone too much to be cognizant of what was really going on in the souls of his kids as they grew up. The apostle John was right when he said he had no greater joy than to hear that his children walked in truth (3 John 4). ...Samuel failed to learn the lesson of Eli. May God help us as parents to be those who don't go in circles, mistakenly thinking we're serving Him, when in reality, we're ignoring our primary ministry – spending not only quality, but a quantity of time with our kids."

- Now, in all fairness to Samuel the onus is not entirely upon him by virtue of how it is that sadly godly parents may end up with ungodly kids.
- While Samuel may have been wrong to not remove his sons as judges, his sons are culpable for their wrong in turning away from the Lord.
- Should we err on the side of grace? Yes, absolutely, but assume that God's grace is an inherited right of our children? No, absolutely not!

Charles Spurgeon - "Grace does not run in the blood, an honored father may have disgraceful sons. Perhaps Samuel was wrong in making his sons judges, for we do not read that the Lord made them so. Great men ought not to injure the church or the state by putting their sons into office which they are not fit to fill."

(4) Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, (5) and said to him, "Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations."

- You'll forgive me for jumping to Samuel's defense here, but I've got a problem with anyone saying to me, "Look, you are old man." I know!
- In all seriousness, what the elders of Israel do will prove to be a huge mistake with far reaching ramifications for all the future generations.
- So much so, that it will mark a turning point in Israel's history as a theocracy, as they now demand a king so as to become a monarchy.

- It's important to note that having a monarchy was not necessarily against God's will, rather, it's the way they go about it that's against God.
- As we'll see here shortly, they are rejecting God as their King, instead preferring to have a man as their king, like all the other nations had.
- It's this wanting to be like everyone else, because everyone's doing it mentality that will end up being the problem for the children of Israel.

G. Campbell Morgan of this writes, "This is the revelation of the supreme wrong. They had been chosen to be unlike the nations, a people directly governed by God."

(6) But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." So Samuel prayed to the LORD. (7) And the LORD said to Samuel, "Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them. (8) According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt, even to this day—with which they have forsaken Me and served other gods—so they are doing to you also.

- Here we're told that because Samuel took this personally, God tells him that it's not him that they are rejecting rather it's God they rejected.
- It's almost as if God is saying, Samuel, welcome to my world, I've had to deal with their rejection since the day I brought them out of Egypt.
- Then, surprisingly God tells Samuel, in effect, to go ahead and give them what they want, in spite of the fact that it's not what they need.