

{ consequences of compromise }

:: 1 samuel 8 ::

A somewhat recent phenomenon in the history of entertainment is the idea of *the prequel*. And why not? You've already got the cast. Already have a predetermined ending. You already have a built in fan base. Why spend lots of time making something new when you can just give us more of those wonderful characters who we dearly love?

Star Wars episodes 1 through 3 are, of course, the most successful prequels to date. Disney has a prequel or two for many of their films, usually going straight to DVD.

Now, sometimes we may feel like these prequels can be a little tacky, a little cheap, but there's something we like about knowing more about how the story began. We like to know what happened before the adventure. Thus, prequels have secured their place in entertainment history.

Our next verse by verse study series is going to be through the life of David, the poet king of Israel. Pastor Gene is going to take us through 1st and 2nd Samuel to study this remarkable man in depth from God's word.

This morning we're going to be looking at something else. We're going to see the *prequel* to king David. We're going to see how this whole thing started to come about. Because, after all, God never intended Israel to have a king. Israel, God's special nation, was to be set up as a Theocracy. A people governed by the Lord. Protected by His power. Led by His counsel. Not ruled over by a man or a dynasty.

But in 1 Samuel, chapter 8 verse 5 we read:

1 Samuel 8.5b - ..."Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations."

God had warned His people that this day would come. When Moses was delivering the Law to the Israelites, God prophesied about this future demand for a king.

Deuteronomy 17.14 - When you come to the land which the Lord your God is giving you, and possess it and dwell in it...(you will) say, 'I will set a king over me like all the nations that are around me,'

The Israelites had already made good on this prophecy once before.

Judges 8.22-23 - Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, "Rule over us, both you and your son, and your grandson also; for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian." But Gideon said to them, "I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the Lord shall rule over you."

A mortal kingship was never part of God's perfect plan for His people. We find out why in our text: the 8th chapter of 1st Samuel.

Now, as always, when we look into God's word there are a great number of things we can learn and study. In this passage there are a number of characters, a number of topics to meditate upon. We could talk about parenting. We could talk about ministry. We could talk about faithfulness. It's God's word, and in God's word there are always untapped reserves of heavenly treasure for us to observe and apply.

But this morning our desire is to focus on 2 things: **God and His people**. What did the people do and how did God respond? Because **we** are God's people. We are His people called by His name. And He is our God who is the same yesterday, today and forever. And so as we diligently come to the Scriptures, we should be able to place ourselves into the congregation of the people of Israel to see if we are thinking or behaving in any of the same ways that they were. We should be able to place ourselves within the text and learn spiritual principles about our lives. Today our desire see the incredible consequences of compromise. We will see what happens when God's people give up on God's plan in favor of something else.

In contrast with that, we will also see the faithfulness, the graciousness, the tender-mercies of a God who is willing to love us even when we are in rejection of His loving plan for our lives.

So, beginning our text, we read this:

1 Samuel 8.1-2 - Now it came to pass when Samuel was old that he made his sons judges over Israel. The name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beersheba.

Samuel is a great character from God's word. I encourage you to spend some time this week studying his life. He was the last official judge of Israel and the first official prophet of Israel. Acts 3.24 and Acts 13.20 categorize him that way for us.

But he was nearing the end of his life and, therefore, the end of his ministry as God's go-to man for the people. His plan was to continue the office of judge forward through his sons. However, there was a problem.

1 Samuel 8.3 - But his sons did not walk in his ways; they turned aside after dishonest gain, took bribes and perverted justice.

Lots we could learn about Samuel. Lots we could learn about his sons. But, remember, this morning we're focusing on the people of Israel and the Lord Himself. Samuel and his sons simply provide the setting to our story.

So what happened?

1 Samuel 8.4-5 - Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, 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."

And here we have the beginning of the kings in Israel. This was a decision that would impact their history for almost 500 years. 500 years of *king-dom* until the fall of Israel and Judah to outside forces.

Our decisions in life have consequences. For those of you who are married, that decision had some consequences, didn't it? Great ones. For those of you who are parents, the decision to have kids has some big consequences doesn't it? For those of you who joined the military or moved here for a new job or decided *NOT* to move for that new job. Our decisions are not made in a vacuum, but they have a great impact on our lives and our futures.

Spiritual decisions are the same. The choices we make in our lives as Christians make a difference in our day-to-day lives. We may think that our Christianity is segregated from everything else, but that's not how it works. Our spiritual lives and our physical lives are not independent from each other. Therefore our decisions spiritually have an effect on what happens in our daily living.

Now, if you're **NOT** a Christian here this morning, if you've never accepted Jesus Christ as the Savior for your sins, then you only have **ONE** spiritual decision to make: where you are going to spend your eternity, heaven or hell. Heaven is a real place, hell is a real place. They are serious. They are eternal. The only decision an unbeliever has is where you want to go after you die. That's the choice God sets before you. You don't have to go to heaven. You don't have to go to hell. You make that decision on your own, by either trusting in Jesus Christ for forgiveness or rejecting that forgiveness and trusting in your own relative goodness or some other system by which you hope to be saved.

But as Christians, we are faced with many decisions. We're faced with many pressures. There are stresses and tension in our lives.

This is essentially what the people were saying to Samuel. They came together, met with him, and said, "Look, Sam, your sons are blowing it. They're causing a lot of problems for us." They looked at the failure of these 2 guys and they felt the pressure that they were under and they said, "The **SYSTEM** is broken. The plan doesn't work. God was wrong."

Bible commentator Matthew Henry points out that they came to Samuel with respect for who he was as a servant of the Lord. They didn't come as an angry mob, but instead they came in peace, discontent and discouragement, but peace. They came and they said, "We just can't take it anymore. We want out. We've been looking at all the other nations out there and they don't seem too bothered by their kings. In fact, the people out there seem to have it pretty good. They don't have all this Theocracy stuff. They don't have all this living by faith. We want what they got. We want out."

The first step toward their great compromise was the fact that they were comparing themselves to the world and they were discontent with what they found.

Regardless of the fact that throughout the time of the Judges, every time another nation came around they subjugated and oppressed the people, regardless of the fact that they were currently having all sorts of issues with the Philistines and their kings, who God had just miraculously delivered them from, despite the hatred from those nations and the brokenness within those nations, the disgusting practices they had and the great horrors that their people endured, God's people looked out and said, "We just can't take it anymore, we just want to be like everyone else. The grass is greener on the other side."

This wasn't just about Samuel's sons. These people had corrupt leaders before. In fact, before Samuel was the go-to guy there was a man named Eli. He was the Lord's man, the priest of Israel. He had 2 wicked sons as well, and the Lord saw that wickedness and He killed Eli's sons, because, despite His

personal mercy, Eli's boys were unrepentant. And in light of that unrepentance, God judged them because He wanted to protect His people from their abuses.

Now Samuel's boys were following in their steps, and the people came and said, "We just want out. We want out of the Theocracy. We want out of the arrangement. We just want to be like the rest of the nations."

We see Samuel's response in verse 6.

1 Samuel 8.6 - But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." So Samuel prayed to the Lord.

This word *displeased* means to be broken up, to be broken-hearted. This wasn't just about his sons, though they were the excuse. This was a unified rejection of God's plan and God's rule in the nation. They said, "We don't want a man of God to judge us anymore, we want a king. We want *HIS* counsel. We want *HIS* wisdom. We want *HIS* rule in our lives. We're giving up on the relationship we've had with the Lord."

And Samuel was broken-hearted. Not only would he have felt like his life had been a waste, a joke, but, as a man of prayer, he would've understood what this would mean for his people. That word *displeased* can also be translated as *to be afraid*. He was afraid of what would happen next in result of this rebellion, this turning from God toward the things of the world.

1 Samuel 8.7-8 - 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. 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.

So here we see the heart of it. We see that, bottom line, this was spiritual compromise. This was real rejection. How it must have broken the Lord's heart to hear His people come and say that they were tired of Him. "Thanks for the Exodus. Thanks for the Promised Land. Thanks for the judges. Thanks for the revelation. Thanks for delivering us from the Philistines and returning the Ark of the Covenant to us like 2 weeks ago, but we're done. We don't want You anymore. We can hang out from time to time in the temple, but that's it."

They didn't want Him to reign. They didn't want Him to protect. They didn't want Him to govern. They didn't want Him to counsel. Instead they wanted to be like the nations around them. They wanted to blend in. They wanted to live like they did.

How did our God respond? If this were Greek mythology it would be time to warm up the lightning bolts.

1 Samuel 8.9 - "Now therefore, heed their voice. However, you shall solemnly forewarn them and show them the behavior of the king who will reign over them."

This is our God. Grace and mercy and long-suffering. Patient and loving, willing to reach out to His people even when they don't want Him. Wanting to warn and to protect and save His people.

Of course, we will see that God would work mightily in the kings of Israel and Judah. He didn't quit loving them, but He condescended to their weakness, willing to help them within their compromise because He is a God of love and grace who respects our decisions, even when they are bad ones.

But first, God charged Samuel to go and reveal to the people what was going to happen when a man ruled over them. It was a word of prophecy, it was a word of warning, it was one more chance to accept God's plan rather than what they were seeing out in the world. One more chance to turn away from selfish discontent and toward the abundant blessing and protection and plan of heaven.

1 Samuel 8.10-18 - So Samuel told all the words of the Lord to the people who asked him for a king. And he said, "This will be the behavior of the king who will reign over you: He will take your sons and appoint them for his own chariots and to be his horsemen, and some will run before his chariots. He will appoint captains over his thousands and captains over his fifties, will set some to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and some to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers, cooks, and bakers. And he will take the best of your fields, your vineyards, and your olive groves, and give them to his servants. He will take a tenth of your grain and your vintage, and give it to his officers and servants. And he will take your male servants, your female servants, your finest young men, and your donkeys, and put them to his work. He will take a tenth of your sheep. And you will be his servants. And you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, and the Lord will not hear you in that day."

Samuel delivers the message and he explains to the people what this compromise would cost them. It would impact their jobs and their produce. It would impact their families and their kids. It would change everything for them and it would cost them very dearly and in return they would gain, well...nothing. And one day they would call out to God and ask Him to deliver them from the burden of having a king and the Lord would have to ignore that request because He respects our decisions and allows us to live with the consequences of compromise. He shows grace. He shows mercy. But we must live with the choices we make, especially when that choice is to walk away from the will of God.

This was all set before them and they were at the moment of decision.

**1 Samuel 8.19-22 - Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, "No, but we will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles."
And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he repeated them in the hearing of the Lord. So the Lord said to Samuel, "Heed their voice, and make them a king."
And Samuel said to the men of Israel, "Every man go to his city."**

Notice the words of the people. They hear this prophecy, this explanation of what exactly they were going to get if they made this choice, and they said, "No." No. They didn't believe Samuel. They didn't believe God. "You guys are always so pessimistic! It won't be that bad!" And again they point out what it is they're asking for: a king to judge them, a king to go out before them, a king to fight their battles, "so that we can be like all the other nations." All the things God had done for them, they now wanted a man to do.

That's our text. This is the beginning of the kings of Israel. This is the record of a great compromise in the life of the people of God.

But what about us this morning? How do we apply these things? How do we get there from here?

As we said before, we are people who, in our lives, are presented with pressures and with decisions. Each day in this walk with the Lord we are presented with choices to make in how we will live our lives. Whether we will take up our cross, or not. Whether we will serve the Lord, or not. Whether we will have joy, or not. Whether we will engage in the life that God has given us...or....not.

And here's what happens. We're out there in the world, living this awesome life that God has made for us, living by the guidance of the Holy Spirit of God, and then our flesh within and our enemy the Devil start trying to deceive us into believing that *REAL* satisfaction, *REAL* fulfillment is found *OUTSIDE* of our relationship with the Lord. And if we are not on guard against discontent and against discouragement then we will very possibly find ourselves compromising in our decisions and in our spiritual lives.

It starts by comparing ourselves to the world outside. Comparing our wealth. Comparing our prominence. Comparing our habits. Comparing those physical, temporal things.

And then we look within at our lives and we start believing the lie that a relationship with God is just too much work. We start believing the lie that there really isn't much of a payoff in a life with the Lord. "Lord it's *HARD* to walk by faith. It's *HARD* to live selflessly. It's *HARD* to let Your will and not *MY* will be done. Yes, You're offering me purpose. Yes, You're offering me peace. Yes, You're offering me a good marriage and help to be a good father and a life lived *ABOVE* the problems of the world, but this life is hard. I can't do it on auto-pilot." And we allow ourselves to start entertaining these thoughts. "Yeah...yeah...the system is broken. This stuff isn't worth it. There must be something better on the outside."

Of course, when we entertain those thoughts, we are doing exactly what the Israelites were doing. We're forgetting that God has **delivered** us from the weight and the wages of sin (verse 8). We're forgetting that God has **saved** us from our enemies (the book of Judges and chapter 6 of 1 Samuel). We're forgetting that God has put in place a system through which we can find not only everlasting life with Him after death, but also satisfaction and contentment and purpose in our lives here on the earth.

We forget those things. And now we're on the road to compromise. Now we're setting in motion decisions that will take us away from God, or, more plainly, we start making decisions that are in *contradiction* to God. Rejection of His will. Rebellion from His plan.

In those moments, God is very faithful. He is very loving. He says, "Look, I don't want you to do this, and here's why...you're going to have to deal with some serious issues if you take this step away from Me."

Look at the Israelites. What did they gain in making themselves a king? Saul, their first king, was a disaster. David was their second king. While having some peace from without by the grace of God, the nation was full of internal strife. David's son Solomon did some good things for Israel. Of course he was also an idolator, who, at the end of his life the Bible says, did not love the Lord. And then after that, division. The kingdom split. And down and down they went until the people of God found themselves in captivity in Babylon, the nation destroyed.

When we look with longing eyes out in the world, thinking that their grass is greener, we forget the fact that they are in bondage. They are living lives that are spiritually empty because they do not have the One who satisfies.

"But Lord, if I have a little more money, then I'll *REALLY* be satisfied. So, I just have to stop coming to church and just work that extra day every week."

"But Lord, if I just blow some steam off, then I'll *REALLY be fulfilled*. I know you called this relationship I'm in, or this thing I watch on the computer sin, but I want this outlet and it's really not hurting anyone."

"Lord, I'm glad about heaven, I'm happy I don't have to spend eternity in hell, but I'm not interested in any of the other stuff You're offering. That's ok, right? You'll forgive me, won't You? Your grace abounds, doesn't it?"

God *does* forgive. But the plan He has for us is set up so that we will be protected and fulfilled in a personal relationship with Him. When we're in communion with God, then He can provide us with wisdom for decisions. He can provide us with peace through difficulty. He can provide us with strength for suffering, love for others, happiness and purpose, *GRACE IN LIVING!*

This is why God warns us about compromise. Because when we walk away from God, having convinced ourselves that a life outside of Him is really free, really fulfilling, really fantastic, when we do that then we must live with the consequences of that decision. And compromise always costs dearly, because we give away the wrong things. We compromise our spiritual wealth for nothing. For the lies of the world.

Look at the Israelites. They gave away so much. Verses 11 through 18. They gave away so much, what did they gain? What did they receive that God hadn't already done better?

We're out there, and these things come before our faces. Little idols start waving to us. Little sins start inviting us to their party. Little discontent starts to set it and we start believing that the grass really is greener on that other side. That this life of faith isn't all it's cracked up to be and that life *OUT THERE* is easy and pays off in every way.

But out there we will find nothing. We may find some material wealth. That wealth will rust and fade. We may find some sinful pleasure. Sin *IS* pleasurable for a time, then it destroys. We may find some personal prominence. But man's life is a vapor. It appears for a moment and then it's gone. We can't even name all our presidents (unless we're in middle school).

God isn't trying to keep us from something. He's trying to save us from it. And He's trying to replace the emptiness that world offers for something powerful and personal and everlasting. That's what compromise is about. Choosing what the world offers over what God offers.

Matthew 6.33 - But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

Do you want fulfillment? Do you want purpose? Do you want love? Do you want satisfaction? Do you want a marriage that works? Do you want help in your parenting? Do you want a life that matters?

Then seek the Lord. Stay within His plan. Live a life of faith and faithfulness. And all these things shall be added to you.

We don't want to pay the price of compromise. It's not worth it. Especially when we really understand who God is and what He wants for our lives. Look at this example in 1 Samuel chapter 8. Compromise changes everything. It sets us on a path of hurt and disappointment.

Stay the course. Remember who God is. Remember what He has done, not only in history, but in your life personally. See what kind of life God is offering You in His word. And reject those thoughts that come in which seek to deceive you into buying the lies of the world. Out there we're alone. In here, we have the Lord God and all His fullness.

He loves you and He has a plan for your life. Take hold of *HIS* plan and discover the abundance that He has in store.