

Title: Our Sinful Desire for Substitution

Scripture: 1 Samuel 8

Series: God, the True King!

1. Introduction:

- a. Today, our chapter is one of the most significant chapters in the historical books of the Old Testament because it starts the transition from judgeship to kingship in Israel.
 - i. In our passage, we find the Lord providentially guiding the history of his covenant people, even though the negative circumstances recorded here.
 1. Although the people reject God, God is in sovereign control and guides His people. God will use this latest sin by the people to bring forth incredible blessings of grace in the future.
- b. Our passage tells us that when the Israelites recognized that Samuel had become old and his two sons were corrupt judges, they requested a new institution instead of a new judge. They thought that a human king like those of other nations promised stability and prosperity.
 - i. This was a critical moment in determining the future of the covenant people as a nation. This was a change from the kingship of God to the kingship of man.
- c. At this juncture, we must remember that the leadership of the judges was utterly appropriate and even ideal. Therefore, the people's insistence on changing to a new system was a denial of God's rule. The people were not

content with what they had and started looking for a change.

i. The people lose sight of God, who rules as the real King of the universe

1. And yet, because God loves His people, the savior would eventually rise from this new monarchy and save His people.

d. Beloved, the function of this chapter reveals God to us, but it also shows the sinful tendencies found within us.

i. Our passage is a mirror, and the reflection we see is startling!

2. Verses 1-3: When leadership goes wrong: When Samuel became old, he made his sons judges over Israel. (2) The name of his firstborn son was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beersheba. (3) Yet his sons did not walk in his ways but turned aside after gain. They took bribes and perverted justice.

a. **When Samuel grew old**, the phrase implies that a long time had passed since chapter 7, the victory over the Philistines. By now, not only has Samuel grown old, but his two sons have become judges. However, the heart of their Father does not beat within them. The people notice that Samuel's sons are corrupt men. They were men that **turned aside after gain. They took bribes and perverted justice.**

i. It is right to say that Samuel had contributed to the lack of the people's trust in God by appointing his sons as judges instead of waiting on God to raise a

godly judge. The judgeship was not supposed to be hereditary, and Samuel made a terrible mistake in appointing them.

1. The previous judge Gideon had refused this very temptation. We read in **Judges 8:22-23** Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, “Rule over us, you and your son and your grandson also, for you have saved us from the hand of Midian.” (23) Gideon said to them, “I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you; *the LORD will rule over you.*”
 - b. The biblical testimony against these two men negates their godly names and upbringing. Both names contain the short forms of the divine name Yahweh. Joel means “Yahu is God.” Abijah means, “My Father is Yah.
 - i. But we see no God within these so-called leaders.
 - c. Beloved, ungodly leadership always presents the people with an opportunity to sin against God.
3. Verses 4-8: We naturally have a sinful desire for substitution: Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah (5) and said to him, “Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations.” (6) But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, “Give us a king to judge us.” And Samuel prayed to the LORD. (7) And the LORD said to Samuel, “Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being

King over them. (8) According to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you.

a. Samuel's age made a transition in leadership imminent. The people recognized that Samuel's sons, like Eli's, were sinful men unworthy of leadership. The people, unwilling to relive the past, decide that they need a new form of government. They ask for a monarchy!

i. However, we cannot read this and be sympathetic towards Israel. Their decision to transition from God's kingship to human kingship was sinful rebellion. Notice what God says to Samuel. **They have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being King over them.** In other words, Israel was shifting their expectations from God to mere men. Idolatry was again resurfacing.

ii. The asking for a king was not sinful. God had made provision for a monarchy already. We read in:

1. **Deuteronomy 17:14-15** "When you come to the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, 'I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me,' (15) you may indeed set a king over you whom the LORD your God will choose. One from among your brothers you shall set as King over you. You may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother.

2. The sin was not in asking for a king but in the motive for wanting a king.
 - a. In the current emergency (Samuel's age and his sons' unworthiness), we do not read that the people cried out to God for deliverance, but instead, they demanded a king. They want to be delivered on their terms and not on God's terms. We see a clear desire for substitution. Their help would not be in the strong name of God (see chapter 7) but in a new form of government. It is not the monarchy but trust in the monarchy that is the sin.
 - i. The people had stopped trusting in God and were seeking deliverance outside of Him.
 1. They desired to substitute something tangible (to be seen and held) in place of God.
 - ii. We have the same tendency as Israel to assess our problems mechanically and not spiritually. Our first impulse is to assume there is something wrong with our methods, something we can fix. In relying on anything other than God, we commit the sin of believing that God is not enough. We venture into the darkness of idolatry.
 - iii. Sometimes we can ask for something that seems very logical, yet the request is

completely godless because we do not ask for His glory but because of our desire.

1. **James 4:3** You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.
3. Israel had a long tradition of rejecting God.
 - a. **According to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you.**
 - b. The people that abandoned idolatry in chapter 7 are now re-embracing it in chapter 8. They again commit the sin of chapter 4 and set themselves up for eventual destruction. The people have not learned from the past and are therefore doomed to commit the same deadly errors.
 - b. We must also notice the people's desire to fit in with the world. They want to be like the rest of the nations. Beloved, this is like us. We want to be relevant, and accepted by those around us. But this desire is clearly sinful. We were not called to God through Christ to be the same as those in this world.
 - i. **1 Peter 2:9** But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

4. Verses 9-18: God's warns us against Idolatry: Now then, obey their voice; only you shall solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the King who shall reign over them.” (10) So Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking for a king from him. (11) He said, “These will be the ways of the King who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen and to run before his chariots. (12) And he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. (13) He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. (14) He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his servants. (15) He will take the tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants. (16) He will take your male servants and female servants and the best of your young men and your donkeys, and put them to his work. (17) He will take the tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. (18) And in that day you will cry out because of your King, whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will not answer you in that day.”

- a. Although a monarchy can be abusive, what we have here is not a warning against an abusive monarchy but a plain warning about the usual practices of a monarchy.

God admonishes Israel as to the cost of their sinful request.

- i. Samuel warns the people that a king will **take**. The word **take appears multiple times in our passage** (seven to be exact).
 1. Notice that Idolatry always takes what is precious from us and never gives us anything of value back.
- b. God warns the Israelites that they would lose their sons, daughters, lands, possessions, and money in the form of taxes. To abandon God and go after anything else is idolatry and idolatry always enslaves the people.
 - i. **John 8:34** Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.
 - ii. **Romans 6:16** Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?
- c. The people are called to continue with God as their King and abandon their sinful desire to substitute God from their lives. In the kingdom of God we are slaves to righteousness and free from sin. This is why Jesus says to us in **John 8:36** So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.
- d. Our passage warns against walking in idolatry (the substitution of God for other things). The price for such folly is high.

- i. God warns the Israelites **that in that day you will cry out because of your King**. There will be a time when the idolater will realize the consequences of his or her actions.
- ii. On that day of realization and mourning, the Bible says **that the Lord will not answer**.
 - 1. Israel would come to regret this sinfulness but by then, they would have to live with the consequences of their actions.
 - a. Beloved, let us pay close attention to the warning of God. We are called to walk in obedience to the first and second commandments by offering our lives to God through Jesus Christ the Son. We must never substitute this truth with anything else. We are to serve Christ only.
 - b. Today, let us learn from the foolishness of Israel. May we not live with the regret that idolatry causes.

5. Verses 19 and 20: Our sinful tendency to refuse God's Wisdom: But the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel. And they said, "No! But there shall be a king over us, (20) 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."
- a. Knowledge or information, or truth does not in itself change a person. There is a difference between having the truth and loving the truth.

- i. **2 Thessalonians 2:10** and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.
 - 1. It is love for the truth, for Jesus, that saves a man!
 - b. Israel hears God’s wisdom but does not submit to it; God gives Israel instruction, but Israel is not teachable.
 - i. **Proverbs 12:15** The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advise.
 - c. The expectation of Israel was **that a new king would judge them and go out before them and fight their battles.**
 - i. Had God not fought for them before? How quickly they forgot the lessons of Chapter 7 and their whole history of deliverance. Beloved, we are prone to set our hope for deliverance in anything else but God. We are apt to forget Ebenezer.
 - 1. Instead of looking to God for help, we are more interested in telling God how to help us.
6. Verse 21 and 22: Be careful what you ask: And when Samuel had heard all the words of the people, he repeated them in the ears of the LORD. (22) And the LORD said to Samuel, “Obey their voice and make them a king.” Samuel then said to the men of Israel, “Go every man to his city.”
- a. This last portion of our passage teaches us a very important and frightening lesson. If we will not listen to wisdom’s voice and demand from God what we desire, then sometimes God gives us our requests to our

own hurt. This is a testament to our obstinancy and refusal to listen to God's wisdom and counsel.

- b. We should never be too upset when God does not give us what we want because of His love for us. Oftentimes, God's refusals are not indifference but a manifestation of His kindness.
 - i. After all, our Father knows best.

7. Summary:

- a. Listen to the warning of our passage. How easily we can misplace our trust. How ashamed we are to be different. How resistant to any word that does not agree with our own opinion. This is the way of man, but it should not be the way of the saint. Beloved, let us walk in humility with God as our King and no room in our hearts for any other!

8. Benediction:

- a. **Proverbs 9:10** The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.

Public Reading of Scripture Proverbs 9:1-12