

The Sermon on the Mount – Part 2

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Faithfulness of God

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Let's pray together.

Heavenly Father, tonight what a wonderful reminder that all that garners our attention here on earth, that there is coming a day, a day that will be without end where all we will see is you and all we will say is how good that you are. God, tonight as we study your word, may it serve its purpose in our life to prepare us for that day. Lord, may this be a training session to garner our hearts and our minds and eventually our lives. Lord, no matter how many days you give us on this earth, how much time we've got left, God, may tonight prepare us to live those days, Lord, with a holy reckless abandonment for you until the day that we sing that hymn of heaven in your presence in the heavens. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

This evening, I would encourage you to turn to two very specific places in your Bible. We're going to go into 1 Samuel 8:6 and Matthew 1:17, and just kind of as a means of introduction I want to say a couple of thoughts. The first is this, that we studied a new series this morning working through 1 Samuel. Tonight, it's going to kind of be an extension of that. Secondly, we have been studying on Sunday night the book of Matthew very extensively of which technically we're in the Sermon on the Mount on chapter 5, but tonight we're going to go back to chapter 1, and the reason is because when we studied chapter 1, there was one very strategic specific verse that I purposely did not address at the time because I wanted to patiently wait for a strategic time and I believe our study of 1 Samuel serves as that. And last, for those of you who have been a part of our ministry even here at First Baptist, Opelika, for years, I will share with you from the beginning very transparent, there is nothing tonight that I probably am going to share with you that you have not already heard me share at some point. You know there are some messages, there are some aspects of scripture that I am of the opinion that we can never hear enough. Tonight is not going to be "new." Hopefully it will be fresh, but tonight is a study of a verse in Matthew 1:17 that is an enigma to many, but I believe very strategic to us, and the reason that I want to go back to chapter 1 tonight is because what we studied this morning and what we're studying in 1 Samuel serves as the backdrop for Matthew 1:17.

Back in 1 Samuel 8, kind of the linchpin, if you'll allow me to say, of our study of 1 Samuel, the people of God have gotten to such a point where they would rather do it the world's way than man's way. You can just sense that there is change on the horizon, something's about to be dramatically different. In verse 6 of chapter 8 of Samuel, when the people demanded a king, it says,

6 But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD.

As we studied this morning, we see this transition in 1 Samuel from the judges unto the kings, if you'll allow me to say from the sacred to the secular, and though, even though that King David was an incredible man who served the Lord mightily, things changed dramatically when Saul became the ruler, when Samuel not only anointed David, and then eventually whom we know as Solomon.

So let's go back into Matthew 1:17. We're going to spend the majority of our time there this evening, a verse, again, as I said, to me has been an enigma. It's in the middle of the chronology in the genealogy of Jesus Christ. Here in verse 17 it says,

17 So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.

There's a reason that the Lord spoke those time frames the way that he did. There's a reason he used the words that he did and in that first paradigm when he says "from Abraham unto David are 14 generations," you realize that what we just read in 1 Samuel we are knocking on the door of the end of that first parameter that is mentioned.

So what is happening in 1 Samuel? What was happening when the Lord gave us verse 17 of Matthew 1? And more importantly, what is happening in our very lives today? Is it possible that you and I are walking again through the steps of history that again are being played out right before our very eyes?

I want to begin tonight with just a definition of some terms. These are not terms that are new to you, but at times it helps to clarify them. What you and I know as time. Time is linear. You know there's an old joke that there's a reason they call it the present because it is a present from God. You can't get yesterday back and there's none of us that can reach into tomorrow. One of the aspects about time that is so critical, and I think causes so much stress and heartache and anxiety in our lives and even sometimes depression, is that no matter how hard we try, we cannot go back in time, and no matter how hard we desire, we cannot go ahead in time. Time is linear. You cannot get it back once it passes and you cannot get ahead of it no matter how much you desire.

But then there's what we call history. History is cyclical. In fact, it has been said by people more intelligent than I, the one thing that people do not learn from history is to

learn from it. It's also been said that those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it. We have this nagging struggle in humanity that for some reason we cannot learn from our mistakes. We cannot learn from those that have gone before us. One of the greatest pieces of wisdom that my dad ever gave me, he said, "Son, if you will learn from other people's mistakes, it'll be a lot less painful in your life." He's absolutely right and history is written, history is there so that we will see the path that others have gone down. But here's the struggle: we always think we're invincible. We always think that we have better resources. We always believe that that was their struggle, their problem, don't worry, we've got this.

And then there's the word here in Matthew 1:17. It says from Abraham to David were 14 generations, from David to the carrying away, 14 generations, from the carrying away unto Christ were 14 generations. In our context, in our culture today, when we hear the word generation, we typically think of that which is chronological, our parents' generation and our grandparent's generation, our children's generation. But the word that's used there in scripture is actually used in two different ways by Jesus Christ himself. Matthew 24, he's on the Mount of Olives, we refer to it as the Olivet Discourse. It is this great teaching on eschatology, end times, the end of the world, and that famous statement there in verse 34. He says, "When you see these things happen, know that it is the last generation." What was Jesus saying? That when these things happen before your eyes, you can click the stopwatch, you can know that time is running out, the *chronos*, the time has come to an end.

The word generation does mean a time frame much like we would allude to our parents and/or our children and their specific generation, but the word in scripture generation also can mean a way of thinking. It can mean a philosophical means. Let me give you an example from the mouth of Jesus. Matthew 12. There's gathered a large group around him. In fact, it says it was a vast group. It would have contained those that would have been what we would call elder statesman. It probably would have contained middle-aged young adults, probably some young children, and a plethora of multi generation families. They come to Jesus and those that spoke out said, "Jesus, we know that you've done all these things, and we've heard the teachings, but we would ask a sign of you." It's a famous passage where Jesus said, "Fine, you want a sign, I'll give you a sign. As Jonah was in the belly of the whale three days and three nights so the Son of man will be in the heart of the earth three day and three nights." If you'll allow a little commentary, basically what Jesus was saying is, "If you need something more, just come to the grave and three days after they put me in, I'm going to walk right out. There's your sign." But what's fascinating is after he communicated that information, he made this statement, "an adulterous generation seeks after a sign." It wasn't a statement to one chronological generation that was before him, it really was a response to the totality of the group that had gathered that day.

So when we see the word generation in the Bible, it can mean a period of time such as our parents' or our children's generation, it can mean a way of thinking or an attitude that is a cross section of all chronological time periods and/or generations, or a combination of both. In Matthew 1:17, there are three strata of generational time periods mentioned:

from Abraham to David, from David to the carrying away, from the carrying away until the time of Christ. And I will go ahead and get ahead of the proverbial curve, you can do all the research you want, you can search on the internet, you can go to Google, you can go to the archives of the dusty libraries and there is no way you're going to reconcile those 14 generations with a chronological time period.

So what do we discover? We discover, and this is important to 1 Samuel 8, we discover that in the Old Testament and in humanity's existence in totality that is cross cultural, that you and I have a way of living that merges these two definitions of a generation. Allow me to illustrate. In the Old Testament, there would be a king who would walk in the way of the Lord. His son would walk in the way of the Lord. His grandson would walk in the way of the Lord. But his great grandson, the fourth "generation" would restore the high places. He'd burn incense unto Ashtaroth and Baal. Technically speaking, there were four chronological generations but there are actually only two philosophical generations. Those first three generations, though they had a different chronology, they had a similar philosophy. And so when you go back into the Old Testament and you try to reconcile this verse about the 14 generations, understand it's not just about birth dates and date of death, it's beyond that because you will see time periods where multiple chronological generations will be in rebellion to God and you'll see multiple chronological generations where they will be faithful to the Lord, and then there are times where there's this rapid succession of going back and forth.

The Lord said there were 14 generations. He was specific about that term. Is it possible that God was giving us insight in the gospel of Matthew whose back story is 1 Samuel that we need to heed in our lives today? Well, one of the things that I've become more and more convinced with age is this, that all of our best endeavors academically are simply our attempts to try to catch up with what the Bible's already told us. I'm of the belief that it is the Lord who gave scripture, it is the Lord who is all-knowing, so we are on a search to somehow find out what he's already communicated, not the opposite. How many archaeologists and people of great intelligence have claimed that certain individuals in certain places and stories in the Bible could not have been true until we stumble upon a section of dirt that has the remains that validate what scripture already told us?

What's interesting, as Matthew 1:17, has been an enigma for centuries and even millennia but interesting within the last several decades there have been some social scientists and other academic individuals who stumbled on the fact that the Bible has been right all along, and as they study the cultures of humanity wherever they find themselves, that we as humanity, no matter where we reside, no matter what language we speak, no matter what continent that we call home, we all have the same tendencies, we all have the same perplexities in life, that's that we continue to repeat history. We continue to fall into the traps of our forefathers. We continue not to learn from the mistakes of the past, and we more than often repeat them. It doesn't matter, again, what the background, what the culture may be, we as a people tend to take these generations and merge both the chronology with the philosophy.

Let me share with you what social scientists of modern day have discovered that the Bible already told us days ago, as we will see in a moment in 1 Samuel 8. It's that when you have a culture, when you have a group of people, no matter if they're the Jewish people of the Old Testament or even the "Americans" of today's contemporary culture, our humanity tends to go in cycles. Rarely, if ever, will you see a group of people keep the same thought and/or way of thinking for beyond an elongated period of time. Now what I'm about to share with you, this is "social science" coming on top, but it validates what we see in 1 Samuel 8, is that every culture, every group of people, has a series of turnings. That's just the term social scientists use. Let me unpack that for a moment. A turning is when you become something different than you were before and/or you confirm that which you fought to remain as. So for example, there was a time and this is an obvious example that will help us understand, you do realize a time in our culture where we were British, not American, and that event that took us from one designation to the next is "a turning." You do realize back in the Old Testament, there was a time where there were no Jewish people present. You say no? Oh no, there wasn't. Who was the first Jewish person? Abram. And so again, there is that turning in the culture, and this crosses all cultural areas and/or boundaries.

Here's the fascinating discovery that helped solve the chronological problem in Matthew 1:17, is that within these major events there is a series of four what we might say minor turnings or generational changes within. They're referred to as the high, the awakening, the unraveling, and the crisis. It goes a little something like this, that a culture or group of people have an event which establishes them as a people for a purpose at such a time as that. That generation, for a lack of better terms, that wins that battle whether it be a warfare battle or a philosophical struggle, what do they do? They celebrate. Institutions are validated. The people are solidified. You are more important as a part of the whole than you are as an individual.

Then what happens is that the next generation comes whether it be chronological and/or philosophical, and they call it the awakening where institutions are ridiculed, the individual is highlighted. We begin to question why are we celebrating? Why do we think so much of ourselves? What's to gain? Why don't we try new ideas? Why don't we branch out a little bit more?

The third generation looks at that generation and it says, "Why are you searching for that which does not give fulfillment?" They look at the upper generation and say, "Why are you celebrating that which is so tainted?" And we call it the unraveling. There's an increased distrust not just of institutions, but really a mentality that the sky is falling.

By the time the fourth generation comes around, whether it be chronological and/or philosophical, there's a crisis where that which was celebrated by the first generation, that which was won on their behalf now must be decided, is it fought for or is it forsaken?

Now, do you understand, particularly in the Old Testament, there's this constant cycle of being fervent for the Lord and then falling from the Lord, being fervent for the Lord,

falling from the Lord. All we're seeing in what the social scientist has labeled as these turnings is we're seeing these generational cycles.

So back to Matthew 1:17. So all the generations, from Abraham to David are 14 generations, from David to the carrying away to Babylon are 14 generations, and from the carrying away into Babylon to Christ are 14 generations. Allow me to explore those three strata, that concept of the 14 generations. As I mentioned, a culture, an entity, a subsection of humanity, they form themselves really in a time of crisis, even though it may be called a turning. As I mentioned, there was one point where you and I at least on this land were British, now we're American and we could use a multitude of examples worldwide.

So let's go back to Matthew 1:17, the generations from Abraham. You do realize that prior to Abraham, everybody was Gentile. There were no Jews. From Abraham unto David what was the one thing that established that people were Jewish? What is the one thing they said, how do we know that you're Jewish? How do we know you believe in the covenant? How do we know you're being faithful to what God has been promoting and teaching? It was circumcision. That is what set them apart. In fact, there are stories in the Old Testament that that's how the Jewish people won battles when they convinced their enemies as grown adults to participate in that endeavor in the healing process, and the subtle attacks. At the end of the day, how did you know, how did you determine the foundation? How did you determine the undergirding of the "Jewish people"? It was circumcision, so much so that we have individuals in the Old Testament whose wives demanded that their children undergo the process.

From Abraham unto David are 14 generations. Now I'm going to push pause for just a moment. Back in 1 Samuel 8, where are we in that continuum? Where are we in that timeline? Well, Samuel is about to anoint Saul as the king. You do realize who comes after Saul, right? David. In other words, what we're studying in 1 Samuel, what we saw tonight in 1 Samuel 8:6, we are knocking on the door of that first line in Matthew 1:17. So what's happening? What has changed? What is so different? Well, notice the second line in Matthew 1:17, "and from David unto the carrying away." You know there was one thing that King David desired more than anything else, he wanted a permanent place for the presence of the Lord, that ark of the covenant. Sure, the tabernacle was God-ordained and instruction for building, but he wanted it to be permanent. He wanted it to be in Jerusalem, but remember, even though he sought it, he desired it, God told him, "This is not for you." Who was the one that the Lord allowed to "build that famous building"? Solomon. And Solomon built that building. Circumcision did not go by the wayside. It was not thrown away. It was not dismissed. But from Solomon's day forward, that was not what determined the foundation of the Jewish people. That was not the core of their existence. It was no longer, "I've been circumcise," it's, "I come to the temple at the right time with the right sacrifice and I make the proper offering." In fact, it was that temple worship that designated and made them so distinct.

If you study the history of Solomon unto approximately the 6th century BC, guess what you see? Those turnings, those ebbs, those flows. There are times of fervency for the

Lord and there are times of faithlessness to the Lord. But the year was 586. There was a man by the name of Nebuchadnezzar who came from the east, ransacked what we know as the place of Jerusalem, tore down the temple, and the Israelites went into exile for 70 years. Interesting, from Abraham unto David, if you were to ask them, "What does it mean to really believe that you're a Jewish Israelite follower, child of God?" They would have said, "Well, we've been circumcised." If you'd ask them from Solomon until 586, they would have said, "Well, we go to the temple and we make the sacrifice." Then they returned. Notice that third statement, from the carrying away. Seventy years later, the Israelites returned. Seventy years later, they came back, and Ezra the priest reestablished the worship, Nehemiah rebuilt the walls. In Nehemiah 9, that temple, it was dedicated, it was established, what does it say? From the carrying away unto the time of Christ. Again we see these turnings, we see these generational cycles.

But in Matthew 27, Jesus Christ the Messiah is there upon Mount Calvary. He has been crucified. He has made those famous seven statements. That high day according to John 19:31, is literally moments away. The Sabbath is about to begin. They're preparing to take the bodies down. He is placed in Joseph of Arimathea's tomb and what happens? It says that the veil of the temple tears from the top to the bottom and the earth quakes. You see, no longer is that temple in Jerusalem the "foundation of the faith."

Walk with me through just a brief history here. What was the foundation from Abraham to David? Circumcision. What was the foundation from David unto Babylon? The first temple. What was the foundation from when they came back until Christ? It was the Second Temple. But guess what 1 Corinthians 6 says, in Christ you are now the temple of the Holy Spirit. Something changed in every time. What does it say in Matthew 1:17? It was on the 14th generation. In simplistic terms, what it basically is communicating all throughout your Old Testament and we see this even beyond, is that we as people don't learn from history. We tend to repeat the same mistakes over and over and over but here is the fascinating discovery, that it is on that fourth turning or that "14th generation" that everything changes. We go from circumcision to a temple. We go from a temple to exile. We go from a temple unto the veil being torn. And here is the fascinating thing that time eludes us tonight, this is not just a social science study, this is a biblical principle that can be viewed through the lens of humanity irrespective of the culture, the background, the language or the place of life. I believe that God communicated to us in Matthew 1:17 something that we need to heed in our lives today.

Back to 1 Samuel 8. Something was happening. There was a group of people who'd been circumcised. There was a group of people that if you asked them about their past, they would brag that there was Abraham and there was Isaac and there was Jacob. That they were the people of God living in the place of God. That they were the persons of God. They would have communicated and told you that they had favor and blessing of him because they "did what he asked them to do." They had the "foundation." They had the history. They had the back story. But what happens in 1 Samuel 8? They no longer desire to do it God's way. They've said, "We're done doing it God's way. We're ready to do it a different way."

Now look back at 1 Samuel 8 through the lens of Matthew 1:17. From Abraham to David are 14 generations. They had no idea they were knocking on history's door. They had no idea that everything was about to change. They had no idea that their rebellion, that they're going contrary to the will, the way in the word of God would reap the consequences that it would. They had no idea as elaborated in chapter 8 that their daughters, their sons, their finances, and even their lands would be taken on this decision. Saul would rise up, he would be a king of ill repute, for a lack of better terms. David would then reign. And then Solomon would come, the temple would be built and everything had changed. According to what we just read in Matthew 1:17, they were knocking on the door of that famous 14th generation.

So how does all this apply to you and I today? How do we take a story of 3,000 years ago, how do we take an obscure verse in the genealogy of Jesus and how do we apply this to our lives, our specific lives at least here on the North American continent? Well, guess what? We're part of a culture. We're part of a group of people who have come together in like mindedness. We've come together with like purpose. And as I mentioned, there was a time period in the past that we were not what we are classified today as "Americans." There was a time where we were "British." But there was a pretty significant turning that took place, it's called the Revolution. There was a time period where we went from being loyal or having allegiance to one entity into another. And the reason that's significant is because a new culture was formed, a new people was established. And boy, have we had our moments of greatness and we've had our times of not so much, true? We've had ebbs and we've had flows. We've had struggles and we've had successes.

Can I share with you something very unique about our culture? One thing that you can guarantee when it comes to "being an American" is we are radical individuals. We love our independence. We love to promote the fact that we're not like our parents and we're better than our kids, right? That's who we are. We love to bemoan the generations of days gone by and we love to despise the ones that are coming behind us. Why? Because over the course of our history we have not seen subsequent generations that have followed in the footsteps of their parents. You can see it in our literature. You can see it in our art. You can see it in our music. I could give you 1,000 examples about how we, as "Americans," love to bemoan the past and despise the future. We want to change everything for the sake of the present in this time period.

Here's what's interesting, if you go back to what we know is the Revolution and you claim, and by the way, social scientists have done this, and you claim that that is the "first American generation." It wasn't actually the babies that were being born, it's the men who were writing the statements and fighting the battles and the wars. If you want to do a very strict chronology that has a very strict philosophical difference, then what you and I know today as the millennials are the 14th generation.

That's the 14th generation of "American social history." What's interesting about that is this, that you and I have a group coming in behind the millennials, oftentimes they're called Z and other such, and I'm not worried so much about the designation tonight as much as I am this, there has been a phenomenon that has happened in our culture in

recent days that even baffles the social scientists and the problem is my generation. You see, I'm an X generation, alright that's who I am or at least they tell us that we are. If you want to go back to those turnings, we are the generation of the unraveling. We are the ones we look at our parents and see our parents were the hippies of the '60s. Our parents were out there looking for some new thing. Our grandparents were part of the greatest generation. They won the war. Our parents fought about the war and then we said the sky is falling. So what happens? We produced a bunch of millennials who don't know where they're going or how to do anything. Did I mention that we're fiercely independent when it comes to being American? But here's the unique thing. Did you know that the Z generation today is not the biological product of the millennials? You say, "What do you mean?" It's us. Did you know that the X generation is the first generation not just in American history but in the world to produce two biological generations? Don't believe me? I've got friends with kids in college and kids in the nursery. I'm not joking. Because of healthcare, prolonged date or expectancy to expect children and because of unfortunate broken homes and death and other factors, one of the amazing things is that what many people would claim today is the 15th generation is actually 14B because their parents are the same parents of the millennials. I know individuals today who moved their kids into college this weekend and took a kid to preschool last week. Why? Because we are a very unique group that has actually produced two chronological generations.

You say why is that important? I'm going to ask a very critical rhetorical question tonight: who are we if anybody to think that we can fight history? Isn't that humanity's problem? We think, well surely we will do it better. We don't need to learn from the mistakes of our past. We got this. What was happening in 1 Samuel 8? A group of people got so confident or self-confident in who they were they basically said, "We don't need God anymore. We got this." What happened? It went to a different subset. What happened when you look at these three strata in Matthew 1, every time we go from one line to the next, we don't find revival, we find apostasy, and we discover that there's a beginning and there's an end to all of these strata in Matthew 1:17, and in 1 Samuel 8 we're seeing the back story. "Give us a king. We don't need to do it God's way. We've got this."

So tonight, I want to close with something very near and dear to my heart that hopefully is a merging of 1 Samuel 8, Matthew 1, and the life that the Lord has called us to live. Can we talk about what the history books won't tell you? It's not the job of the history books. The job of the history books is to give you names, dates and places. What will the history books not tell you? The United States of America, our culture, we've experienced three major turnings. It's called the Revolution, the Civil War, and the Depression of World War II. Can we all agree those are three pretty major events where we as a people had to decide who we would be, what we would believe, and how we would go forward.

Now you can go read the history books and they'll give you a lot of different theories of the how, the what, the when, and the where, but let me share with you something that they won't share with you: all three of those previous turnings were preceded by a major revival or awakening on this land. Prior to what you and I know is the American Revolution, there was what we call the first Great Awakening. It started in the middle

colonies, it went to the northern colonies and typically, I hate to say this here in the South, we were Johnny-come-lately, we finished up at the end. What happened in the first Great Awakening? We saw millions and millions of people come to know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. The first Great Awakening was so impactful in this land that the majority of what you and I call Ivy League universities today were established not to study the sciences but theology. Dartmouth was a seminary. Brown was a seminary. The majority of those Ivy League colleges where today you can hardly find a professor who claims the name of Jesus Christ were started as institutions to propagate the gospel. You tell me how we got through those time periods. I'll tell you, we had a revival. We had an awakening. We had people committed and dedicated to the Lord. That's how it happened.

Guess what? Civil war rises up in the late 1800s, 600,000 plus brothers, cousins, neighbors and friends lost their life on the battlefield. You say how did we get through that? I'll tell you how" the Layman's Prayer Revival. Most people never heard of it. A man by the name of Lanphier was so worried, listen to this, this is 1 Samuel 8:6, he was so worried about the spiritual or lack of spiritual condition of America, particularly New York City, that he went to New York City as a missionary to pray over the city and hopefully see that God would bring revival. He had a prayer meeting. Only three people showed up. He dedicated, he said, "We'll come every day. We're going to pray for New York. We're going to pray for America every day from noon to one." They kept praying, they kept praying. It kept growing. Pretty soon everybody was skipping lunch, going to prayer meeting. It started in New York. It went out into Philadelphia and into cities all across. In 18 months in the United States of America from 1857 to 1859, 18 months there were 1.5 million Americans who got saved. Let me do some math for you. You want to do some comparative study, that would be the equivalent today is if the entire state of Texas got saved. You talk about making a difference when population base. A lot of people don't realize this as awful as the Civil War was, when the sun set and the bodies were attended to there were actually chaplains from the South who went across the lines and led Bible studies in the North. There were chaplains in the North who did the same you.

You say how did that happen? Because they had had a revival. They had had an awakening. They'd had a move of God in their life, And you predate what we know as the Depression of World War II, I call it the tent revival movement. There was hardly a city, there was hardly a cross section of America did not have a tent that was set up that every night somebody was singing, somebody was preaching and somebody was getting saved. I've shared this story before, I'm going to share it again because it's one of my favorite. In a town that my wife is from and where I spent eight years of my life, Waco, TX, you can go back and you can look at the notes, you can look at the things that were written about that time period, in the First Baptist Church of Waco, TX in one of their business meetings minutes has recorded that no longer is there any known prostitute in the town. Do you know what that's called? Revival. Awakening. You say how? Because we became a people surrendered to and submitted to the will, the way in the word of God.

Why is this important? Look at 1 Samuel 8:6. They said, "Give us a king." And then go home tonight and watch the news. What is our culture saying right now? "Give us a king. Throw out the judges. Give us a king. Throw out the scripture. Give us reasoning, Throw out faith just give us philosophy." We are living 1 Samuel 8:6. We're right there. We're knocking on the door. Here's the contemporary problem: you cannot name one major movement, revival or awakening that's happened in this culture in the last several decades. Not one.

Now I'm not here to bring doom and gloom. I'm not here to pour "cold water on the hot flame" of our lives, but you know what I am here to do? Sound the alarm. 1 Samuel 8:6 isn't some dusty passage in some old library in the historical archives, it's a mirror reflection of the life that you and I are living in this culture today, and you and I would be foolish to say, "Ah, we got this. We don't need to do it the way it happened in the past week. How we going to fight history?" We can't. You say what is the answer? If there has ever been a time where you and I, the people of God, need to be serious about the things of God, that time is now. History is knocking on our door, the question is, will we answer the call?

It's not just about the "young ones" that we saw dedicated this morning in our service because when you go back to the first Great Awakening, you go back to the Layman's Prayer Revival, you go back to the tent revivals, it wasn't just one chronological generation, it was all of them. It was a collective group that said, "We would rather give ourselves to the word of God than to the ways of the world." You and I today are living out history. We have said collectively, "Give us a king." Chronologically, we're right there with Matthew 1:17. Here's the good news that I'll close with: we serve a God who writes history and just because we have failed in days past does not mean we have to fail in days future. May we be found faithful.

Before I close, I'm going to give you one last positive thought. When Joseph Lanphier went into that old Dutch Reformed Church on the third floor to pray that day, he was the only person for 40 minutes. Can you imagine if he'd quit? Imagine if he'd said, "Well, nobody is interested but me. It will never work." There were about three or four people that joined him by the end of the hour, and they committed to pray. You see, you might have the tendency to look around tonight and go, "There's so few of us. How could this ever happen?" Study all the great movements of God, all the revivals, all the awakenings, they never started with thousands, they started with the few who were faithful and the Lord brought the harvest and the Lord brought the increase. Tonight we're living out 1 Samuel 8:6. We're knocking on the door of Matthew 1:17 and we've got the stories of the Lanphier's and the others. May we be found faithful, may we be found fervent and may we see God move again in our lives and in this land.

Let's pray with their heads bowed and our eyes close. As we come to this time of response or time of decision, I know there may be some here, there may be one who says, "I've never been saved. I've never asked Jesus to save me. I've never called upon his name." We not only welcome, we implore you to do so tonight. We'd love the opportunity and the privilege to celebrate the transformation in the saving of a soul. We

also know there are many of us tonight who say, "You know, I called on the Lord years ago." Some of you would say it's been decades ago. There are some of you here tonight, you've seen the ebb and the flow, you've seen the generations, you've seen the turnings, you've seen this before your very eyes and you know where we are. Maybe tonight it's not about stepping out and stepping forward, maybe tonight, just tonight where you summons the Lord, you fall prostrate proverbially saying, "O God, may you move in my life, may you move in my home, may you move in our church, may you move in our community, may you move in our culture and if possible, God, may you move throughout all the world." Tonight as we come to this time of response, the response simply is just to do what the Lord has asked you to do at this time in your respective life.

Heavenly Father, as we come to a time of response, Lord, we know that each and every one of us has a response to make. It may be public. It most necessarily will be private. But God, I pray tonight that we would heed the words that were written thousands of years ago, that we would not fall into the narcissistic trap of saying it'll never happen to us. God, tonight whether in this place or even back in our homes, may you burden us to see things changed, may you burden us to see things differently, may you burden us to walk in the steps of the revivals of years gone by. And O God, if it's possible, may we see it again. Lord, tonight may your voice and your voice alone be the one we hear and heed. It is the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.