

The Tipping Point

Faithfulness of God

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Bible Text: 1 Samuel 8:1-22
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As you're being seated, if you do not yet know, tonight at 6 o'clock they will be here in concert. They'll also be in the next two worship hours, so your Sunday school class may want to have a brief meeting and decide to skip and come on back.

But nonetheless, I want to invite you this morning to open your Bibles to the book of 1 Samuel 8. Today as we continue a study through the book of 1 Samuel, if you are a guest or a visitor with us, I want to somewhat give just a little backstory to where we find ourselves. The book of 1 Samuel is typically known best for this famous story between David and Goliath, and we'll get there in chapter 17, but really it is emulative of the entire book known as 1 Samuel because we see this Goliath of a culture, not just that man, there's this Goliath of a culture that continues to beat down and to threaten and to be persuasive over the David of those who were faithful to the way, the will and the word of God. And what we've seen through the book of 1 Samuel is simply this: what does it look like when a people who are trusting in the Lord decide to trust in themselves? What does it look like to move from the sacred to the secular? What does it look like to say, "God, rule us by the judges but now we'd rather have a king like all the other nations"? We've been building to today. You see, chapter 8 is that tipping point. Chapter 8 is that in spite of what God has done in previous verses and in previous chapters, the culture, the community says, "We don't want God anymore controlling us. We want to look just like everyone else." Today is not just a message that is timeless from 1 Samuel 8 but you're going to see in a moment it is incredibly relevant for each and every day in our life.

Beginning in verse 1 of chapter 8, a somewhat lengthy passage but necessary for our ears. It says,

1 And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel. 2 Now the name of his firstborn was Joel; and the name of his second, Abiah: they were judges in Beersheba. 3 And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment. 4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, 5 And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make 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 unto the LORD. 7 And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, 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 unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee. 9 Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them. 10 And Samuel told all the words of the LORD unto the people that asked of him a king. 11 And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots. 12 And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. 13 And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. 14 And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. 15 And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. 16 And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your donkeys, and put them to his work. 17 He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants. 18 And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day. 19 Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; [Listen to verse 20,] 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.

This is not just a story of thousands of years ago, unfortunately this has become the story of the world that you and I are walking in each and every day, and it begins particularly in verse 5 with a series of excuses. You know, I had an old coach one day who used to make this statement, "Excuses are like armpits. You've all got them and they all stink." We know that. And the reason we'll discover in a moment, the reason that we make excuses is because underneath that excuse is a hidden agenda. There is a desire to do what we want to do no matter what the evidence may be, and so we're looking for that one thing that will allow us to have a clear conscience to do our own will in our own way.

What was it that they used as an excuse? It's the Achilles's heel of Christianity. We hear it each and every day: hypocrisy. Notice what they said about Samuel's sons in verse 5: they go after filthy lucre, they have perverted judgment. And don't get me wrong, I'm not here to excuse his sons. They were wrong in every way, but do you find it odd that here they have a problem with Samuel's sons but they didn't get as upset with Eli's sons. Remember Hophni and Phineas? They were actually desecrating the temple with their carnal desires. Now don't get me wrong, these guys are wrong but they've missed the

whole point. When they came to worship, they were judging God not based on who he is but based on those who claimed his name.

We see the same thing in our world today. If I've heard it once, I've heard it a thousand times, "I'd be a Christian if it weren't for Christians. Bunch of hypocrites." You know, it's interesting, do you know we hold Christians to a higher standard than anybody else. You say, "I don't think that's true." It is true. A hypocrite is somebody who does something different than what they say, and the funny thing is we keep going back and voting them in office. Now just let that one settle for a minute. "Oh, I don't want to believe in Jesus but I believe in my respective party." Think about that. In fact, you cannot find a field of expertise where somebody at some point will give you erroneous information and then move back on that.

Again, hypocrisy unfortunately is a natural fruit of a carnal depraved humanity. So what did they decide to do? We're going to judge God based on the hypocrites by which we all, even themselves, were. And then there's the "who." Notice what they said about Samuel. Some of you are going to take this personally, including myself. They said, "Behold, you're old." Yeah, let that one settle in for just a moment. You know, it's interesting we have become a culture obsessed with adolescence. We're obsessed with it. Think about who the celebrities are. Think about who the spokesmen are. Think about who the individuals that get the most attention. And we've become a culture that once you hit a certain age or stage of gray, somehow you're disposable. It's interesting, you walk through the Old Testament and even though those of us that are aged, we may not be able to run like we used to run, "fight" like we used to fight, do as we used to do. So what did they do with these individuals? They put them at the gate. You say, "Well, why is that important?" Because when these young guys were going out to do something stupid, the old guys said, "Hey now, fella, I've been there, I've seen that and I've got the t-shirt to show you." Yet what happens in our culture today? I call it perpetuating adolescence. We live in a culture today that tells you if you are collecting Social Security, you should still act like you're 20 something. And yet I've got news for you: God came to Noah in the Old Testament and he said, "I need you to build a boat." Noah was not 21. He was 500 years old. He couldn't just trust this in anybody's hands. When he came to Abraham, he said, "I need you to bear the seed of the future Messiah." He was over 85 years of age. Moses delivered the Israelites out of bondage, he was 80. Do you see a trend? In fact, you remember Caleb when they went into the Promised Land? He's over 80 years of age. He said, "Give me the hill." In other words, they used an excuse that's not biblical. Now don't get me wrong, the Bible encourages faithfulness in our youth, absolutely, I've read those passages, but there is wisdom that comes with the age.

And what did they say? "We don't want the hypocrites, even though we all are one, and we don't want somebody who's already seen the results of what we want to do tell us what we can and cannot do." So why? Look at the end of verse 5. It is one of the most destructive statements in all of the Bible. "Now make us a king to judge us like all nations." That's a frightening thought when the people of God say, "We would rather be like the heathen." When the people of God say, "We want to enjoy and to celebrate and we want to live the life of the 'world out there.' We no longer want to be distinct. We no

longer want to be different. We no longer want to be holy. We no longer want to be recognized on behalf of that which God has done for us. We want to be a chameleon and look like everybody else."

It's interesting when you get into verse 6, 7, 8 and 9. The Lord gives an explanation to what's taking place. It's interesting when you get to verse 8 he says, "According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee." This is an important point: what was it that they were contrary to? The word of God. You see, that's where it begins and the enemy knows that. Remember the garden of Eden in chapter 3 of the book of Genesis when the serpent comes to Adam and Eve, what's the first thing out of his mouth? "Yea hath God said." In other words, he gets us to question did God really mean what God really said and that's how it begins. You begin to question it and once you question it, it opens this door to saying, "Well, maybe I know more. Maybe I can think about this. Maybe there's a philosophy, maybe there is something 'new.'"

You know, today we love to throw around these words that in some areas are what we might call fighting words, these words that describe people, their mentality and their approach to life. Some years ago, Tracy and I had the opportunity and the privilege of pastoring a very small congregation. We were young and we were of our youth. No children, just the two of us. I had a wise, can I quote 1 Samuel 8, old man. He came up to me. He said, "Jeff, I know you're concerned about what's happening in the world. I know you're concerned what's happening in the culture." He said, "But let me give you some advice: the thing you need to be most concerned about is when they take the blood out of Jesus and hell out of the Bible." In other words, as soon as we get off scripture we're headed toward whatever destruction that we think will not happen to us.

And that's what he's saying, he said, "Do you not understand what I did for them?" Because when you go back to the Promised Land what did God tell them to do? "Do not deviate from the words I tell you. If I tell you to march around Jericho with a bunch of musical instruments to win a battle, do it. If I tell you to go to a place you've never seen, do it. If I tell you to be this, do that, whatever, just simply do it." But what happened? They said, "Oh no." There's the gods of the Philistines. There's the god of the Amorites. And that's exactly what's happening here. Samuel is hearing from God, God is saying, "Listen, this is what they've done in the past, this is what they're doing in the present," and I want you to understand the "who," notice what God says in verse 7, "They are not rejecting you, they're rejecting me."

You see, one of the things we've noticed in 1 Samuel is the faithfulness of God and I'm going to go ahead and be transparent with you: it will wear you out being faithful to God. It will wear you out when you realize when you believe what you believe there are probably 10 people around you who do not. It is exhausting standing for truth even in the midst of those who claim to believe truth are going contrary to the truth. And there are times when we think, "How much more can I do? How much more can I take?"

I love what God says to them in verse 7, "They haven't rejected you, they've rejected me." Now I know that is easier said than done, but that's the understanding, that's the explanation that we need to grasp today is that when a society, when a culture rejects the word of God to do whatever they so choose to do even if they claim the title or the name of "Christianity," they're deviating from scripture and they're not rejecting you, they're rejecting the God that you love, believe in and worship.

So why? It's an important question. It's not really explained clearly in these verses so allow me to kind of pull out a little bit. What's the mentality, what's the approach, what is the mindset that we see with these individuals? They've fallen for a very classic response. Humanity has done this since the book of Genesis 3 and we've just put our foot on the accelerator in our culture today. We are willing to trade everything to do what I want to do. We are willing to give up our freedoms, our protections, our securities, our blessings, our favor, we'll give it all up, "Just don't tell me what I want to do is wrong. Just don't tell me what I want to do is contrary to God. I want to enjoy it. I want to do it. I want to celebrate it with a 'clear conscience.'" Here's the problem: a clear conscience today may end up in damnation for eternity. Just because the culture tells you it's okay doesn't mean God says it is. Just because the culture says, "We took a vote and the majority said it's fine," doesn't mean God said it is. Last time I checked, rarely are those who are faithful to the will, the way and the word of God, rarely do they find themselves in the majority numerically speaking.

So essentially you have a group of people who God has blessed and favored and taken care of for generations who've come to this point and said, "Do you know what? We're tired of God being a part of our lives. We just want to do it like the world does it." You see, this is where the story picks up steam in verse 10 and this is where the story gets real relevant to you and I today. What happens when you as an individual, what happens when you as a family, what happens when us as a community, what happens at a culture when we make the decision that the God who blessed us in days past shall have no part in days future? What happens when we say the scripture that gave us guidance in days past is now no longer valid for life, belief, etc.?

It's interesting beginning in verse 10 that the Lord speaks through Samuel and he says, "This is what you can expect." Now remember this isn't just what they were walking through in 1 Samuel 8, I would daresay this might be where we are as a culture right now. We are at the tipping point of our culture. Do we subscribe to the way and the will and the word of God or do we do it like everybody else?

I want you to notice in verse 11 he said, "This will be the manner of the king: He will take..." Isn't that interesting. Go to verse 12, "he will appoint." Verse 13, "he will take." Verse 14, "he will take." Verse 15, "he will take." Verse 16, "he will take." Verse 17, "he will take." Do you notice a trend there? When you allow the world to run your life, the world will take everything you've got. Here's the problem: deep down inside, we don't believe it. "But you don't know them, pastor. They're good people. You don't understand. They mean well. They have what's best for us at heart." Oh really?

You see, the problem is whoever you're claiming that for, they're a human being. One of my favorite statements I heard years ago, a man by the name of Ferdinand Porsche, if you don't know who he is, he is the originator of the sportscar that we know as Porsche. He made a statement once at a conference, it was a conference of business leaders. He made this statement, "You went to go hire an employee, you ended up with a person." We want to put somebody in charge of us, we want somebody to lead us, do you know what the problem is? They're a person. Do you know what the problem with a person is? This is easy, in fact, if you don't believe what I'm about to share with you the next two worship hours, I can give you a living, breathing, tangible example, it's called our preschool ministry. When's the last time you went in the preschool and there were two kids and one toy and one of the kids said, "Here, take it, I don't want it"? What does humanity do? "It's mine. Give it to me." I don't care who they are, I don't care who they claim to represent, I don't care what the organization's name is, when you have a person or an entity that says turn your allegiance and your loyalty over to me, do you know what they're going to do? They're going to take it and they're going to take it all.

That's what happened. They took it. Now here's the bigger problem: who did they take? What does it begin with? Took your boys, and then it went to the girls, and then it eventually made its way to the vineyards and the oliveyards and all the things of life. But the "who" there is bigger than just their kids, it's bigger than just their sons and bigger than just their daughters because when the king became the king, this wasn't a one generation thing. This wasn't like in our culture when we say one and done. This was going to perpetuate itself. This was going to be lingering. This was going to go one multiple generations, and I fear that today many of us have fallen into the Hezekiah syndrome. You say, "The Hezekiah syndrome?" He was the king of Judah, the southern kingdom, particularly in the days of the prophet Isaiah. There came a day where he brought in all the enemies of God. He said, "Look at all the gold. Look at all the things we have." Basically what he was saying is, "We want to be just like you. We want to have your respect. We want you to think highly of us. I mean, after all, Israel, we're on the map now. We're a player now. We're a part of the world. Look at all that we have." Isaiah comes to him and he says, "Hezekiah, what have you done? You've given them the code to the vault. You've shown them where everything is. They're going to," listen, "take it all." I'll never forget what Hezekiah says in Isaiah 39. It's deadly dangerous and destructive. He says, "Well, at least it'll be okay in my generation." In other words, this mentality of, "It doesn't matter what it costs my kids or my grandkids, I just want to be comfortable."

You see, do you know what the word compromise really means? When you trade an eternal truth or blessing for temporary favor, and that's really what they did. They said, "Do you know what? We're tired of fighting the battles. We're tired of this. We're tired of that. We're exhausted. We're worn out. They outnumber us. So we're willing to allow our children and our grandchildren and our great grandchildren and subsequent generations, we're willing to allow them to basically be indentured servants to this process so that we can just have a few years of peace and prosperity." Now ladies and gentlemen, this isn't just the story of 1 Samuel 8, this is the story of the world that we're living in today. We've said, "Well, I don't want to hurt anybody's feelings," so don't read Bible verses in front

them. "I don't want an anonymous letter that nobody's signed from another state that doesn't want us to pray," so we'd better not pray. Do you see what we've done? I'm going to tell you what we've done: when you began to compromise, I'm going to give you the Bible word, don't get upset with me, much like Samuel I'm just the messenger, we've become cowards. We've become so scared of what man might do we forget that God is all-powerful. We're so nervous about a lawsuit and we forget that the Lord owns a thousand cattle on the hill. We're so concerned about what somebody might think, say or feel or, God forbid, get their feelings hurt that we do exactly what they did.

Can I share with you the "why"? Verse 20, listen to their explanation, listen for the reasoning, listen for the explanation of their excuses, "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." That's the most frightening part of the whole story. They wanted somebody who was carnal, secular, self-serving, selfish, they wanted that person to fight their battles and here's the irony of the whole story: it's as if they think that they won the previous battles in their own strength. Do they not remember Jericho? Do they not remember Ai? Do they not remember all these famous battles, all these famous interactions? Do they not remember later the prophet Zechariah will remind them, "Not by might nor by power but by my Spirit says the Lord."

You know, just a few moments ago, you heard a song that it takes a miracle. It's a miracle that the creative order that we exist on right now and in is the way it is because God just spoke it and it is, and when we look at the stars above, when we look at the heavens, when we look at that that is around us and we question, "God, I know you did all that but I don't think you can win this battle. God, I know you flung the stars into space but there's some people got their feelings hurt and I don't know if this is a good idea." In other words, we've become a people who've said, "Do you know what? I don't want God to fight my battles anymore." And when we find ourselves in that position, there's a tipping point that takes place. We're going to read about that through the rest of 1 Samuel but can I share with you in brief closure the warning that he gave: when you take your life and entrust it to anybody other than the Lord himself, whoever and whatever that is, they will take everything you've got, they will exhaust it for themselves. They will leave you high and dry.

Don't you remember the story of the prodigal son? You know, the prodigal son is the living example of this story. He said, "Do you know what? I'd rather be out in the world than in my father's house. I'd rather be out with the parties than in the worship service. I'd rather do all that." So what happens? He went, the Bible says he spent all his money with riotous living. Here's the fascinating thing about that story: when his money ran out, how many friends did he have left? They took, didn't they? They left him high and dry. And here's the beautiful thing about that story, he said, "Do you know what? I'm not going to let my friends fight the battle, I'm not going to let this fight the battle, I'm going to go back to my father." Remember what his father did? He embraced him. He said, "Thank you for allowing me to have the place and the position in your life that I should rightfully have today." Maybe today is the day you say, "Do you know what? No longer am I going

to allow them, that or this to be the guide, the director and the fighter of my battles but God alone."

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed as we prepare for our time of decision. You know, maybe you're that person here today that the Spirit of God took the word of God and just opened your heart up and you saw the reality of your position. And maybe today in your crying out, Romans 10:13 is what needs to happen. It says whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Let me remind you it does not say whoever joins a church will be saved. It does not say whoever stops this will be saved. It doesn't say whoever starts that will be saved. It says whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Maybe today you've come to that place in your life where you're willing to admit, "I've got a sin problem. I've been places I shouldn't have been. I've done things I shouldn't have done. I've said things I shouldn't have said and I have had thoughts I should have never thought." If you're in that place today, the Bible says the wages of your sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Maybe today you say, "Do you know what? It's time. It's time just to trust the Lord and turn it over to him." It's not about the specific words that you or I or somebody else might say. This is your heart's cry and maybe your heart's cry today would be just this simple. "God, today I want to confess something you already know about me. I've got a sin problem. But I believe that Jesus Christ came to take care of it. God, I believe, I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he not only came on my behalf but he lived a sinless life, rejecting all opportunities of temptation and sin. God, I believe that when they led him up to Mount Calvary and he allowed himself to be pierced on that cross, he was bearing the punishment and the price of my sin. God, I believe that three days later when the tomb was discovered to be empty and Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, God, I believe that his resurrection over death made it possible for my sin to be forgiven and my soul to be saved. God, today I don't have all the answers to the issues, the struggles and the problems of life but there's one thing I know, I've got a sin problem that only Jesus can fix and I'm asking you to save me, I'm asking you to forgive me. In the best way I know how, I just want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed and our eyes still closed, maybe you're that person today no matter what age or stage or where you're located in this room, maybe you're that person today who had that conversation with the Lord. In a moment, I'm going to pray for us, we're going to stand and sing as a congregation. I want to invite you just to step out and step forward. We've got a whole team of folks that would love the privilege of hearing your story and praying with you and for you. But maybe today you say, "Pastor, I know I'm saved but I'm struggling with living it. I know I'm saved but I'm struggling trusting God about this and about that." You know, maybe today it's not about stepping out and stepping forward, maybe today is about walking out of here in a few moments and saying, "Do you know what? From this point forward I'm going to let the Lord fight my battles. I'm going to let the Lord go before me. I'm going to let the Lord guide me. No longer am I going to allow my opinion, my ideas or somebody else's to circumvent or supersede his."

Heavenly Father, as we come to this time of decision, God, all of us have a decision to render, will we surrender to you or will we do it man's ways? Lord, you have called us today not just to surrender this part of that part, you've called us to surrender ourselves, the entirety of who we are. So God, today as we stand in a moment and we sing this song, may it not just be lyrics on a screen or words off our lips, Lord, may this be our heart's cry that you would have the entirety of us whatever that means. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.