

2/5/23 - 1 Sam. 8:1-22 - "Man's Rejection of God's Rule"

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[0 : 00] When Samuel became old, he made his sons judges over Israel. The name of his firstborn son was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah. They were judges in Beersheba.

Yet his sons did not walk in his ways, but turned aside after gain. They took bribes and perverted justice. Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah 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. But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed to the Lord.

And the Lord said to Samuel, Obey the voice of the people and all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them. 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.

Now then, obey their voice. Only you shall solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them. So Samuel told all the words of the Lord to the people who were asking for a king from him.

[1 : 13] 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.

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 over a boar in the equipment of his chariots.

He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his servants. He will take the tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants.

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. He will take the tenth of your flocks and you shall be his slaves.

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. But the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel.

[2 : 22] And they said, No, but they shall be a king over us. But there shall be a king over us. And 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 when Samuel had heard all of the words of the people, he repeated them in the ears of the Lord. 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. Amen. This is God's word. It's a tough passage today.

It's a tough passage. But trusting in the Lord, I believe, is something easier that's kind of said than done.

Trusting in the Lord. Like truly trusting in the Lord. Much easier said than done. For instance, case in point. Something awful happens in your life.

[3 : 29] It's maybe something that you gave to the Lord and said, God, I need you to work a miracle. Because this life-altering circumstance is about to occur.

And I need you to work. It often challenges our perception when things don't work out according to our prayers.

And directly mars our perception of God's trustworthiness. And with that, it may beg a question. Did we ever trust the Lord in the first place?

Is God truly trustworthy? Is God truly trustworthy? Regardless of the outcome, whether good or bad, of any circumstance that we do give to the Lord and entrust to Him?

And today's passage concerns man's desire for God to make his trustworthiness more accessible, more visible to the world.

[4 : 43] In other words, man wants God to rule man's way. In other words, if justice were lacking in this life, give us something more accessible and visible to bring that justice.

If security were lacking, bring us something. Give us something more accessible and visible to bring safety. If resources are lacking in life, give us something more accessible and visible to lead the way to provision.

You see, what we will find is that trusting in the Lord is an act of faith that requires, that God requires of His people, regardless of what our unbelief beckons for, of give us something a little bit tangible, something more tangible that we can trust.

You see, God is trustworthy and we are not. So, you see, God is a symptom of unbelief.

It is a symptom of unbelief. There's sort of an undertone of uncertainty in this passage. I mean, starting out, a couple words into the chapter 8 passage.

[6 : 06] It says, It says, When Samuel became old. There was a certain time of uncertainty of Samuel getting old. His sons are not following in his ways.

Meaning that unlike Eli's sons, they weren't following in the ways of the Lord because the ways of Eli were a little bit corrupt as well. But Samuel was distinguished from Eli being that his sons were not following in his ways.

So, who's going to lead once Samuel dies? Who is there going to be left? It's uncertain.

And that tone of uncertainty drives the very emphasis of this passage. You see, when circumstances get bleak, who do you trust? Who do you trust?

Who do you trust? Do you trust medicine when you are sick? Do you trust threats? In threats of violence and war?

[7 : 14] You cling to your weapons. When things get tight in your house, do you trust your savings accounts? Well, today's passage will prioritize our lives.

And we will be directly warned of our constant reluctance to trust the Lord often throughout this life. The sermon title today is Man's Rejection of God's Rule.

I apologize for note-takers. Whatever was on the screen before was not supposed to be there. But I might have hit a button. But the sermon title is Man's Rejection of God's Rule.

And I'm going to break this narrative into three separate sections as we see the author doing so.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Lord, we come to you today seeking your word. We seek truth. We seek truth.

[8 : 13] We seek truth. We seek truth today. We seek truth. We seek truth. We seek truth. We seek truth. We seek truth. We seek truth. We seek truth. We seek truth.

We seek truth today. Father, help us see that your word is truth.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. So, the first section we'll see in the passage is that man's... we see man's proposal and God's response.

And so, each of these sections is going to kind of encapsulate the theme found within this section of verses. And what we have is a lot of interchanges, but a lot of content shifts by the end of the passage.

And what we have is man's proposal. In verse 4, it continues after the time of uncertainty. It says, Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah and said to him, Behold, you are old.

[9 : 21] That was nice of them, wasn't it? Behold, just in case you were wondering, you're old and your sons don't walk in your ways. Now appoint for us, a king, to judge us like all the nations.

But the thing displeased Samuel. And they said, Give us a king to judge us. You see, the threat of insecurity makes its debut in the life of Israel.

And knowing that the good days are not going to last forever. In fact, the bad days are just one good day away from occurring.

Israel was facing a leadership vacuum at this time. That threatened their stability, threatened their security as a nation. And so, man doing what man does best, rather than surveying history to find peace in God, they're looking all around and surveying the world and finding peace in what the world has.

It's a theological conundrum. They're finding greater peace in the world than the past history and recollection of what God has done and proven to be over and over again.

[10 : 47] They say, almost in a demand, Give us a king. Give us a guy who we can call upon.

Who we can walk into their door and wake them up in the middle of the day tonight and disrupt them. Give us somebody physical here. Who we can run to.

Who can wield a sword for us. Who can wield a gavel of justice against the enemy. If you've been tuned in to what God has done in the nation of Israel up to this point through Judges, this is exactly what He's done.

Right? He's been doing this all along. It appears God's way isn't good enough. We remember, Judges, the way that God did things.

He didn't give Gideon a massive army. That would have been our way. Yeah, we'll show the enemy. No. He uses what's foolish to despise the wise.

[11 : 54] He says, no, I'm going to whittle your army down, Gideon, to 300 men, so that the enemy knows who is against them. So the enemy knows who destroys them.

Not to be mistaken that this is man's victory. That's God's way. And it became clear it's not good enough. And so in the days of Judges, when oppression came, they would be freaking out.

How did we get here? Well, they got themselves there, if you remember, in Judges. They were the ones who served the Baals and the Ashtaroth, so they created their own downfall. But God, in His faithfulness, would raise up a judge for them.

And this provision came to be insufficient for them. They wanted something more accessible, more visible, that would compete against the other nations.

They wanted to be a king. They wanted to be a king. They wanted to be a king. They wanted to be a king. They wanted to be a king. And in such a request was a rejection of God's rule and reign over them.

[12 : 59] Selfishness and cowardice. You see, it would appear that man has quite a problem. I don't know if that might be a public service announcement, but we got problems, people.

This tendency is of seeking new gimmicks in our lives are so prevalent in our day even today. Seeking out new ways.

God doing something new. How many people have heard that in a church? Breaking tradition. Breaking tradition. A new way. A new device. In opposition to the way that God has made so theologically real for us to cling to.

That He is who He said He is and He will be who He said He will be. It's not up for us to dictate or break from tradition. We are the problem.

We are the ones seeking new gimmicks. We are bringing the rabbit's foot of the ark into battle thinking that that is going to help us win the battles. We are the problem. And so God responds to Samuel in verse 7.

[14 : 12] He says simply that mankind's rejection, don't take it personal, Samuel. Their rejection of you is theologically a rejection of me.

Verse 8. This has been for all time, God says. Mankind's rejection is habitually never ending. It happened since Egypt, he says to Samuel.

This whole time they want a judge. They have a judge. Now they want a king. They had a king. What would they be lacking other than getting their way?

What consolation that this verse provides anyone in any sort of leadership position, right? It could be a pastor. It could be somebody, a boss at work. It could be a parent.

Those parents who their kids reject their leading and guidance. Maybe a teacher who is constantly disrespected in the classroom throughout the week. Or a parent whose child refuses to follow the Lord.

[15 : 22] We see here that rejection is habitual. And to not take it personal. Those responsible for leading, others are not responsible for their following or for their rejecting.

They are to lead. They are called to lead. In other words, it's God's rule that they are rejecting by their rejection of mankind's leadership.

It's theologically certain in this passage. And verse 9, probably the thing that stands out the most to us.

Look with me. If you don't have your Bible open, grab something from the chair. Verse 9, the most unexpected feature of this passage.

God warns them. God warns His people.

[16 : 24] The God of creation warns His creation yet again. Long ago before this instance in Genesis 2, the Lord God commanded the man saying, You may surely eat of every tree in the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat.

For in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die. Bye.

How many unbelievers have we heard? Those who reject God's rule or faith in anything like this? Anything spiritual. How many unbelievers have we heard of their reasons why they reject God?

because it's all that happens after the warning. Here's the warning. Here's the mess. God warned His people, and the people reject it. It's not a God problem. It's a man problem.

Friends and unbelievers, don't believe for a second that your grudge against God is justifiable, that is ever justifiable. This passage clarifies the problem.

[17 : 50] Mankind is born into rebellion, and rebellion fans God's wrath. It was our rebellion that crushed Jesus Christ on the cross, and it is rebellion that we must surrender as mankind.

We must surrender our rebellion. In our surrender, we believe in Jesus Christ and now enter into not God's wrath, but into God's peace by faith. This nation knew God's trustworthiness and God's rule and rejected it by a desire for self-rule.

And so the second section, Samuel comes back. He warns them. See, God's warning to man. He said, if you have it your way, like the McDonald's slogan, if you want to do the McDonald's way, have it your way. This is what it's going to look like. Six times God warns them, saying that this king, you want it your way, he's going to take, in six different references, he will take your children and your servants to serve him. He will take your livelihood. He'll take the best of your livelihood. And guess what? Verse 17, you shall be his slaves.

You see, for rebellious people, where does chasing our path apart from God ever lead us? It's nowhere good. But for some reason, there's a glimmer of hope when we do so.

We do so subtly. We do so at times not so subtly in our lives. But indeed, it will lead us nowhere good. Here in this instance, by going, having it their way, breaking tradition, this is going to lead to bankruptcy.

[19 : 58] This is going to lead to oppression. This is going to lead to mass chaos in their nation. And worst of all, look with me in verse 18.

Did you catch that?

Did you catch that? God will hear the cries of distressed people, and He will not respond to them.

That blows my mind, that we can travel so far in our rejection to something that God has proved time and time and time and time again through His Word.

In other words, the desire and defiance of God's people to have power accessible, to have something visible to the world, blinded them. Their desire blinded them to that reality, that a holy and just God would hear them crying, but you would hear no answer.

[21 : 38] That's a hard reality. How many cries must God hear that come from the lips of defiant and obstinate mankind?

From the very discomfort and the fruit of our poor choices, we cry out in discomfort, God, why is this happening to me? Well, you rejected His way.

Shouldn't be this hard, but it is. How many warnings God has provided for mankind concerning our propensity to self-rule? And this propensity to self-rule will far outlast every single one of us in this room.

This is a problem of man stemming from Adam. This will continue long after we're dead and decomposed in the grave, and for generations upon generations ahead, we'll remain the same.

And so Samuel gives a warning to his people. Samuel gives a warning to exiled Israel a little bit further over here. He gives a warning for us today and generations ahead that have His Word in their hands.

[22 : 58] What a warning it is. You see, the theological reality of this passage testifies that God often judges a nation by giving wicked rulers.

Maybe I need to repeat that for all of us just fresh out of an intense election season. The theological reality of this passage testifies that God often judges a nation by giving wicked rulers.

We can cry. We can beg. We can plead to God. But the fact that He might not ever bat an eye, that's scary.

After warning this nation who knew God's rule, who knew God's ways, they continued to reject it by self-rule.

And so we get towards the end of the passage in this third and last episode. Back to the people responding.

[24 : 12] Laid out a warning. Let's see what they do. And we see man's rejection and God's response. They received the warning.

God's people still cling to their desires of their hearts. Trustworthiness that is accessible and visible. Read that conviction here.

Verse 19. And they said, But no. No. But there shall be 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. In one final interchange between Samuel and the Lord, God granted their request.

The Lord said to Samuel, verse 22, Obey their voice and make them a king. He granted their request. You're right.

[25 : 25] We're constantly, we get so excited even in our day, like when prayer requests get answered and everything. And, again, we should praise when prayer requests are answered.

But we also are getting a warning in this. Let's be careful of the condition of our hearts to which we pray. This nation traded divine authority from God with political authority.

Traded the unseen for that which is seen. Traded God's rule for self-rule. And a warning is stated for us today. The desires of our hearts, regardless of how intense they could be, are not equivalent to God's will.

The desires that are within our hearts are not always equivalent to God's will. And at times, God will discipline us by granting requests.

What do you call, though, a request that's made incomplete, opposite of God's rule?

[26 : 44] What do you call that? When you're coming against God's rule in a prayer request, what do you call everything that they're doing in this passage?

It's called sin. Disobedience. Exactly right. You see, the problem is our desires that rule our hearts and corrupt our minds.

Our desires will coerce us to dethrone God and do it our way, to break from tradition. And we can't forget Jesus' words in John 8, verse 34.

Jesus said, Everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. And church, it's not a matter of if we will desire self-rule.

I don't think any of us could probably get out scot-free of not trying to live our lives without self-rule. So, it's not a matter of if we will ever desire to self-rule, but it is a matter of when we will desire self-rule.

[27 : 58] And specifically, what we do when that temptation to sin comes knocking at our door. What will you do when self-rule desires come knocking at your door?

See, we as God's people, we know God's rule. It's not of this world. It's unseen in the depths even of our own hearts.

John 18, Pilate asked Jesus, Are you the king of the Jews? And his reply was, My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting that I might not be delivered over to the Jews.

But my kingdom is not of this world. Jesus Christ is a good king, capital K, king, who gives.

Completely the direct opposite of the king that this nation desires. And he is good. Jesus said that the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

[29 : 20] In Matthew 20, verse 28. He gave his own life at the cross, dying in our place, that we might be freed from the guilt, not bound to it.

He is the king who, as Revelation 1, 5 says, who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood. This is good news.

Regardless of all the issues that surround us in our world today, we don't have a king problem. We don't have a president problem.

We don't have a mayor problem. We have a heart problem. A self-rule problem.

I can't get the image out of my head of the nation that we live in that holds up big posters of Jesus Christ wearing a Trump hat.

[30 : 23] That is despicable. We live in a day where all we need to do is declare it and boom! We make it happen because the desires of our heart are God's will, right?

Disgusting and absolutely pathetic. We have to be warned as well that our desires do not equal God's will.

You see, the Bible exposes the root of self-rule, whether that being cultural Christianity or Christian nationalism. The problem is always us.

We cannot be fooled, church. I was placed to be a shepherd over this body of people. And boy, I ought to make sure that each and one of us know where the borderline ends between who rules us versus who rules the world.

There is indeed a borderline, a fence line around Steel Valley Church. We are not of this world. And we must all do this together.

[31 : 39] But the tough reality for maybe those who do hold up that Christian nationalism or secular cultural Christianity is that the world can pray until their faces are blue from discomfort of the oppression that's coming against them.

But until repentance comes, until our hearts are repentant of our offense towards God, and that's important because that's contrition.

That's having guilt in it. That's not being scared of, well, I don't want to be more oppressed. I don't want to be oppressed more. No. No. Repentance, having offended a holy God trying to dethrone Him, that's repentance.

Now, I want to qualify. Politics do matter. I would encourage us as a church to get involved at polls. Politics matter, but they matter less in comparison of the glory and majesty of God.

because we know that He's working all things out according to His rule. And if it's a wicked ruler that He desires to win, it is well with our soul.

[33 : 11] And unfortunately, yes, we even, I think, even faithful, fearing, God-fearing Christians, yeah, we're along for this crazy ride, but without a doubt, we know that Jesus Christ is King.

We know that we will be preserved. His reign is everlasting. Our eternal life began at the moment of our profession of faith, and we'll continue till on and on in glory someday.

This world can take and take and take from us, but we have all that we'll ever need in Jesus Christ. Amen? Amen. So, as we close, like I said, this is a tough tone of a passage, but how important for us to submit to God's Word and submit to even the tone and the reality, the seriousness of His Word.

He's calling us to faith in His rule, church. God is calling us to faith in His rule. And this means to exclusively be devoted to the Lord.

Moses commanded in Deuteronomy 5, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

[34 : 27] Jesus referred to this as the great and first commandment in Matthew 22. And you see, at the heart of a covenant relationship is the obligation of mutual devotion.

It's that picture of marriage. We are the, right? We are the bride of Christ. He's the groom. Beautiful imagery.

Just as marriage isn't just one covenant towards another rebellious person. No, it's a mutual sign. God has shown His love to us. Now we love and honor Him as a response.

And this happens surrendering our self-rule for self-abandonment. That it is indeed well with our soul.

This also means having faith in God's rule means that it's an obligation of being set apart. Deuteronomy 14 for the nation of Israel, He said, for you are a holy people to the Lord your God.

[35 : 33] And the Lord has chosen you to be a people for His treasured possession. Out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth, He chose you.

This is a counter-cultural way of thinking. This is a counter-cultural pattern of behavior. This is a counter-cultural goal mindset.

This is a counter-cultural methodology of how you achieve those goals. It turns the world's ways upside down to God's ways. And both of these aspects of faith were apparent in the text then.

It's certainly true for us that having faith in God's rule is exclusively being devoted to the Lord and it also is an obligation. And what I'm trying to say here is that there is this synergy between our vertical devotion to God.

It's a devotion and a delight that we have in the Lord. The Lord is almighty. He is who He is. He says what He says. He did what He did.

[36 : 43] He's going to do what He's going to do. Our focus and our devotion is in that vertical dimension and then in our horizontal dimension of devotion.

We are now separated from the world. We are we don't have a stain of sin in our lives that the world is trying to put upon us.

We renounce our flesh. And indeed there's a boundary line. The world does end and the church does have a beginning.

And here you will find Steel Valley Church assembled in both devotion and obligation to the Lord. What empowers such synergy? Trusting in the Lord with all your heart leaning not on your own understanding.

In all your ways acknowledge Him. You will make your path straight. Paul says in Titus 2 I'll close with this verse for you. He says that the grace of God teaches us it teaches us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions.

[37 : 59] The grace of God teaches us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled upright and godly lives in the present age waiting for our blessed hope in the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

And church when the world comes knocking at your door the door of your heart will you let them in? That question is not whether God rules all things.

The question is does God rule your heart? and may that be true for all of us today to be reminded about.

Let's pray. Let's pray.