



"Consequences": *Calling the Shots*

1 Samuel 7-8

by **Pastor Tim Dodson** at **Jesus Fellowship of Believers in Menomonie Wi** on **Sept 23rd, 2015**

Like today...and like with so many of us, the people of Israel knew the reality and power of their God, and yet their relationship was one of dysfunction and driven by *reaction* rather than *relationship*. The people had...as they did so many times previously, slid away from God and into the worship...we might today say the *desire for* and the *chasing after*, false gods. Samuel reminded the people that if they would just step off their path and return back to God's care that they would be cared for by God once again.

This of course, is something we all call "grace." God's provision for a repentant people! Certainly this is not God's ideal plan for His children. But it is a fact and provision in the reality of fallen mankind. And yet the truth of the matter in the handling of such is that God's grace also therefore provides for a 'life meandering' a repeating cycle of: *calling out to God in crisis, God rescuing them, following God for a time, sliding slowly away to satisfy their taste for the flesh and the material, inevitable apostasy then follows, then a period of debasement and vile living, then the natural consequences of such a lifestyle begin to manifest, and of course the subsequent pain which accompanies such, only to once again find themselves back at the starting point of calling out to God through their crisis to rescue them.* For some, this is called "life."

It has been the pattern and the bane of humanity! But even this seeming 'unlimited grace' is a misnomer because there is a day which inevitably comes that at least effectively brings such '2nd chances' to an end. It is foolish for us to be sloppy on this and expect endless cycles of redemption...and certainly restoration, when we continual abuse not just His love but His patient grace. Even Samuel herein says in verse 12 of chapter 7 that "***Thus far*** the LORD has helped us." Yes...*so far God has been there for us.* But few of us would have any trouble pulling up a name and face of someone who followed such a lifetrack only to eventually fail to get up...fail to return, and today are essentially "gone."

Like Eli before Him, the children of Samuel failed to find a real relationship with God. Sadly, parents today continue to often have the same end result despite the best intentions. I wonder when we will finally realize that...as it has been said, "*hell is paved with good intentions.*" That it takes more than wishful thinking and Sunday church to profoundly affect the spiritual maturing of our children.

But what ultimately was the peoples' downfall was once again attempting to take **control of their lives and destiny**. It's not that they murdered their neighbors or burned villages. They robbed no banks nor snorted any cocaine. They just wanted someone else or something else to rule over them other than God. The irony of it all is that they didn't want God to control them, but then they did a lousy job of controlling their own lives as alternative! They wanted someone to take care of them. They wanted government to supply their needs instead of God. Laziness, deflected responsibility, and of course good ol' fashion compromise becomes easier with time and with practice.

The people of Israel had long practiced the art of using God as a lucky rabbits foots when in crisis and then tossing Him casually aside when standing in relative safety. A perfect example: *why was the ark not returned to Shiloh?* It seemed that the "presence of God"...which the ark represented, was treated in casual disregard except during times of crisis. Not contempt, just a disregard. A failure to place God's presence as a priority. Repentance means action, not just sorrow! The people were upset over the condition of things and the fact that it seemed that God was against them. But they weren't doing anything to change.

The people seemed to have at most a tacit desire to do the right thing, as they anointed a priest to take care of the ark, etc. But apparently a half way approach was sufficient as far as they were concerned. Because things were still not right. Not in the hearts and minds of the people nor 'out on the street' in the culture and society at large. Their cities were still in ruin, their armies were a mess, and they were still effectively under the thumb of their enemies. Samuel called for repentance... A change inward and outward.

Samuel strongly attempted some intervention herein, by discouraging the path of anointing a king over Israel. The people's choice of secularism over spiritualism...government over God, ...*man* over God, caused Samuel to 'take it personal.' It is an easy thing to do as a spiritual leader. The people's rejection of discipleship and faithfulness is so easily taken as a personal slight if not an absolute rejection of a leaders direction. But God was quick to point out to Samuel, that it wasn't *him* that they were rejecting but rather God Himself! It's a hard lesson for any man of God...one I seem to have to learn over and over. But God is faithful and still communicates as unwavering as He did with Samuel.

It's not that the idea of a king is inherently bad. God Himself discussed the idea of a king in several place in scripture. The problem is: **one**, that they wanted such "*like all the other nations around them.*" (vs 5). Their desire was to be like the world! They no longer sought to be God's special people, "set apart" for Him and His glory. In De 14:2 God says "You have been set apart as holy to the LORD your God, and he has chosen you from all the nations of the earth to be his own special treasure." The old King James uses the term "peculiar people." Meaning that you and I are called to be "different." And how we try so hard to "fit in." To make God and His ways "palatable," and His calling easy. Israel wanted to be like everyone else. And most of the time, *so do we.*

The fact is, people will indeed often treat us different a Christians. Sometimes it IS because you're weird and it has nothing to do with Jesus at all! But in truth, much of the animosity we experience is because people have a problem with *God* not you and I!

And *secondly*, God wanted to do the choosing of the king. Because again, the *king* “per se” wasn’t nearly the problem that the issue of ‘*man choosing who they wanted to rule over them*’ was! Israel would indeed pick their own man...the *wrong man*, and after that whole mess plays out, God would make *His* pick. A “man after His own heart” (1 Sam 13:14). God’s choice was, of course, David.

The truth is, we want to pick also. The greater church “votes” for or against their pastor...who in allowing such makes himself a “hireling.” A “job” ...a “career,” rather than a calling. Give us leaders who will not correct us, not call us into account, or push us beyond our comfort level. David would pay *dearly* for his position as king! Read the psalms! He so often felt alone, discouraged, maligned, and even persecuted for simply *doing what God had called him to do!* That is often what is waiting for you “answering the call” to God’s service.

The people would pick a man who looked the part, had the physical and social characteristics that pleased the flesh of the people. After all, we don’t just want a winner, we want him to *look* like a winner! But what he *didn’t* have, we will find out, is a heart after God! Because God ultimately wants to call the shots, so He wants to choose a man or woman who will usher forth HIS will and plan, and will be a *servant*, not just a charismatic “song-and-dance-man.”

Like with all of us, the people were warned about the consequences of their actions. Samuel told them that a king would take their sons and daughters to be his servants, take of their crops and harvests for his men, take *their* servants to be *his* servants, and would tax them of everything they had. He also told them that God had sent a message...that when it all goes bad, and they cry to God about their king draining them dry, that God would not hear them. It was the ultimate throw-down! Because they, like us today, can do as we please and we can take control and call the shots. But in the end, there is no promise that God will get you out of that situation. Redemption from sin is promised, but redemption from stupid decisions is not.

What recourse do we have? Much! Because God IS here with us, and He IS listening. When we go and ask His will He will speak to us. Through His written Word, through the voices of our brothers and sisters in community, through God’s pulpit herein, and even through His “still small voice” (1 King 19:12) and the peace that passes all understanding...*or the lack thereof!* You see, just because you *can* do something, doesn’t mean it is God’s will! Just because you have the ability, the power, the money, or the perceived “open door” does not mean it is God’s provincial will...His express plan, His best path for you.

How often we seem to do what we want...what feels good and fits well with our life plan and then seek to get God ‘on board.’ He becomes the ‘lucky rabbits foot’...relegated to the role of “genie-in-the-bottle.” So I ask you...*are you ok with God telling you ‘no?’* Can God say “stay” when you want to go? Or does your interaction with God only entail the ‘feel good’ experience? Will you...like Israel... “want what you want”...even to the detriment of yourself and all those around you?

Do you, believe that God loves you without reservation, and withholds “no good thing from you?” Who is in control?