

(Pray) May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing to you Lord.

Would y'all please open your Bible or grab a pew Bible and turn to 1Samuel chapter 8. This chapter will be really helpful this morning.

I really like Samuel. Samuel might be one of my favorite figures in all of Holy Scripture. Samuel is a pastor. Samuel is a fighter. Samuel is a father. Samuel is a prophet, and Samuel is the last of the great judges of Israel. Samuel is human. Samuel makes mistakes, and has to face up to them. However, all of Samuel's long life he has tried to be devoted to God. I don't mean he was made to come to church as a kid and always went to church. I do not mean he told people he would pray for them when they were sick, or hurting because that's what we are supposed to say. I mean Samuel lived the life of a person who was dedicated to serving and growing closer to God. Samuel did not always get it right, but Samuel did his very best to put God first. **(pause)** I like that.

In this morning's passage Samuel is well advanced in years. He has grown sons. There is no mention of Samuel's wife. Samuel has faithfully served Israel as God's prophet and Israel's judge for nearly all of his life. However, Samuel had made a mistake. Samuel had placed his two sons, Jo'el and Abi'jah as judges in Beer-sheba. Jo'el and Abi'jah did not walk in Samuel's ways. They were not faithful to God before Israel. They took bribes, and twisted justice for their own ends. The people were not happy. To make matters worse there was a growing sense that Israel was weaker than her neighbors in terms of military might and economic stability because Israel did not have a king. Samuel knew, **as all of us are supposed to know**, God was to be Israel's king. God is supposed to be our King, Lord and Savior. The people were to strive to grow closer to **God**, and **God** would take care of Israel's neighbors. **God** would take care of Israel's economic security. **God** was supposed to be their king, and this was to set them apart from other nations. The people no longer wanted to be set apart. They wanted to be *(in a mocking voice)* "strong like their neighbors."

So all of the elders of Israel gathered together and visited Samuel. I cannot imagine that was a pleasant or cordial visit. The elders and the people of Israel had something they wanted. They wanted a king – to be strong like other nations. **(pause)** Ya know; I doubt it had ever occurred to them the other nations were not nearly so strong as our God. **(pause)** So they visited Samuel. They did not come right out and ask for what they wanted. The elders of Israel started by saying, "Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways; now appoint for us a king to govern us like all the nations" (1Samuel 8:5). **(pause)** Please pause for just a minute and read that verse to yourself. **(Pause to let the congregation read it.)** Please consider what they are doing here. The people have attacked Samuel. The elders have attacked Samuel's family. They did not offer correction or information so as to help Samuel's children shape up. They did not start out saying, "Samuel, I hate to break it to ya, but your boys, Jo'el and Abi'jah, have been perverting justice and taking bribes in Beer-sheba." No, the elders brought condemnation to shame Samuel. Samuel was a good man who had faithfully served God and Israel all of his life, and most of theirs. Now, Samuel had made a mistake. How do they treat Samuel? **(pause)** Church, how do they treat Samuel? **(pause)** Do they offer Samuel grace? **(pause)** Do they give him a chance to correct the issue with his sons? **(pause)** How do they treat Samuel? **(pause)** The elders of Israel treat this faithful man of God like a nobody. The elders feel justified in treating Samuel this way because there is something they want. The elders want something and they are willing to do whatever it takes to make it happen.

My sisters and brothers there are a number of sins that can be done to a pastor. They will make the pastor mad. They will make the pastor angry, but nobody, with any sense, goes into the ministry expecting everything will be sunshine and roses. However, there is one sin that should never be committed against a pastor, and that is to attack the pastor's family. That has happened to me in various places I have served, and I can tell you there is no sin more nasty, despicable and less Christian than for the church to come after the pastor's family. Maybe that's

the reason why I like Samuel so much. Samuel had been through it. Samuel struggled with it. Let's look to Scripture to see how this faithful man of God, who had made a mistake, handled this situation. Picking up with the tail end of 1Samuel 8:6 through verse 8.

“And Samuel prayed to the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, “Hearken to the voice of the people in all 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 which they have done to me, 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.”

When people come to a pastor and make a remark like you're too old, or I don't like your preaching, or I don't understand what point you are trying to make when you teach there is a temptation to take it personally. The focus can shift away from God and on to self. The temptation quadruples when the remark is made about the pastor's family because it's more than pride. The issue becomes self-righteous rage that we firmly believe is justified because it is about our wife and/or children. By a show of hands how many grandparents do we have in the room? (pause) Just how crazy would you become if somebody said something about your grandchildren or bullied your grandchildren? (pause) Please try to imagine that is the headspace Samuel must have been in. The people have reminded Samuel that Samuel is a nobody, and because Samuel is a nobody they can treat Samuel any way they want to get whatever they want.

When Samuel prays to God, God helps Samuel to put things back into focus. God helps Samuel to recognize the people are not just rejecting Samuel's children. Samuel's children were not worthy, and they had messed up. The people were not just rejecting Samuel because of his mistake placing his boys in positions of leadership. The people were also rejecting God. The people had abused Samuel to try to get something they wanted, and what they wanted was to reject Samuel's leadership and to reject God as their king. They were willing to throw God out of the boat to get what they wanted.

God knows what the people and the elders are doing. However, God is wiser than all of them, and all of us. The people have treated Samuel like a nobody – the kind of nobody they can treat like dirt because nobody will care. However, God again uses a nobody to teach Israel and all of the world about the power of God, the only Somebody who really matters. God tells Samuel to give the people what they want, and sets Samuel as the prophet who will anoint Israel's kings. The prophet hears God's message and chooses Israel's king by God's direction. This makes Samuel a bigger

Somebody than they ever dreamed. Samuel is the first prophet of the monarchy and prophets in Israel are not like prophets in other places. The prophets in other places try to win the king's favor. The prophets of Israel tell the king how it's going to be according to God's direction. The prophets often start out as nobodies, and God uses every one of those nobodies to tell us all about the Somebody who matters most. Let's sing about it.

In the name of Jesus Christ,
Amen

'Cause I'm just a nobody trying to tell
everybody
All about Somebody who saved my soul
Ever since You rescued me, You gave my
heart a song to sing
I'm living for the world to see nobody but Jesus
I'm living for the world to see nobody but Jesus

Source: LyricFind

Songwriters: Mark John Hall / Bernie Herms / Matthew Joseph West
Nobody lyrics © Kobalt Music Publishing Ltd., Songtrust Ave, BMG Rights
Management