



And Samuel told all the words of the LORD unto the people that asked of him a king, I Samuel 8:10.

### **God Warns His People**

**Lesson Subject:** To realize that demands for conformity have potential dangers.

**L105. Date:** September 1973. **Text:** I Samuel 8:10-22; 10:1.

**Topic:** God: Will of; Samuel; Saul.

A warning of approaching judgment is a sign of mercy. The Bible is filled with records of God's warning when His people turned from Him into ways which would bring them sorrow and regret. Today's study reviews such an occasion.

Samuel was the last of the great judges which ruled Israel. He was the first of a long line of great prophets of God. The period of the judges is called the theocracy in Israel. "Theocracy" means "the rule of a state by God." Since the nation had no political head—king or president—the people looked to God as the head of their nation. The theocracy ended when the choice of a king to rule Israel marked the establishment of the monarchy.

The days of the theocracy in Israel were troublesome days. The fault lay not in the concept of theocracy, but in the waywardness of the people. Over and over the nation went through the cycle of prosperity, apostasy, oppression, repentance, and deliverance by a judge, only to turn again to sin in the time of renewed prosperity. Finally, the nation came to Samuel, in the person of its leading men, and asked for the institution of a monarchy to rule them. Today's lesson is set against that historical background.

### **I. THE COURSE OF SIN**

What kind of a father is it whose sons grow up to be evil men? He could be a good man or a bad man. The sons of Eli grew up to a wicked

adulthood because he honored his sons above the Lord (I Samuel 2:29), not trying to restrain them in their evil ways (I Samuel 3:13), bringing upon them both a shameful and untimely death, I Samuel 2:34; 4:10-22. Such a negligent father would expect to rear wicked sons.

The situation was different with Samuel, however. He was a man of God. Dedicated to God before his birth (I Samuel 1:11, 27-28), he grew up, recognized from his youth as a prophet of God, I Samuel 3:19-21. Samuel's work was very demanding, however. He followed a circuit in which he traveled at set periods to certain cities where he performed his duties as the judge of Israel — Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpeh, I Samuel 7:16. It might have been that his pressing duties as prophet and judge kept him from his sons. We are not informed. The Bible states, **“And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment,”** I Samuel 8:3.

What sorrow the unworthy conduct of Joel and Abiah, sons of Samuel, must have brought to their father. How it must have pained Samuel's heart to hear the elders of Israel say, **“Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations,”** 8:5. The people were using the evil deeds of the prophet's sons as their excuse to reject the theocracy (rule of God) and to ask for a monarchy (rule of a king) over Israel. It would break any parent's heart to see his child go astray, but how much more when the parent is a prophet of God!

Samuel prayed much about the matter. He felt personally responsible for what had happened. He felt that the people were blaming him and rejecting him. God replied, **“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,”** I Samuel 8:7. Such a serious sin against God was the proper subject for prayer.

Israel probably did not realize the far-reaching consequences of her request. She was following the course dictated by her circumstances. She was fearful of what would happen when the wayward sons of Samuel became leaders in the place of their father. Moved by such uncertainty and fear of the future, she took the fateful course of instituting a monarchy to rule her.

## **II. THE WAY OF SELF WILL, 8,10-20**

It is costly to God's people when they walk in the way of sinners. Israel imagined that her problems would be solved when she had a king. The people resolved, **“Nay; but we will have 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,”** verses 19-20. There was no consideration of the demands a king would make on the people.

Samuel warned Israel that a king would make great demands upon them and their families. The young men of the nation would become horsemen, personal servants, and soldiers of the king. The young women would be conscripted to be cooks, housekeepers, and servant girls. He warned that Israel's families would feel the weight of a kingdom. That was not all. A king would take possession of the best of the fields and claim them for himself. He would also take the tenth of the produce as taxes to support his government. The result would be that the people would one day cry out because of the burden of the monarchy. When that time came, the Lord would not hear. They had chosen their course with deliberate intent, and they must bear the demands that it brought upon them.

A mind that is already set upon a course of action is blind to reasoning. Samuel's warning in no wise changed the demands of the Israelites. They replied, “Regardless of what it costs, we will have a king to rule over us.” Would it not be wonderful, if God's people were so determined to serve?

The way of self will is always hard. God warns when a man's course will bring him to grief, but if a person is insistent in following his will in spite of God's warning, he is permitted to continue. Samuel warned the people of the problems which a monarchy would bring. Even so they revealed their determination to have a king. Samuel reported to the Lord and received the instruction, **“Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king,”** verse 22. The die was cast. The people had insisted upon their own will. God would let them follow their way and suffer the consequences it brought.

Many people have learned to their great dismay that the way of the transgressor is hard. In the years to come Israel must have thought often of the warning that Samuel had given when she insisted upon having a king. It was wonderful for the nation when her king directed her in the way of righteousness, but the nation suffered much when she followed an ungodly ruler in ways of sin. Be sure you do not sin against the Lord by insisting upon your own will rather than yielding to His.

### **III. GOD'S PERMISSIVE WILL, 8:21-22; 10:1**

All things work according to God's will. Some things agree with His purposive will, and some things are permitted by His will. Observe the distinction between those two phases of the divine will. Those things which

God desires to come to pass so that He causes them to happen may be said to be His **purposive** will—He purposes and accomplishes His will. The purposive will of God would apply to all things holy and right and good. On the other hand, some things happen which we cannot say were done because God wanted them to happen. Those things were allowed by God's **permissive** will. That is to say, He permits some things to happen which He does not approve. All matters of sin and evil would come under God's permissive, but not His purposive, will. Whether God purposes or permits, all things happen under the will of God.

Israel's change from a theocracy (rule of God) to a monarchy (rule of a king) was in God's permissive will. It was permitted after warning. It was permitted even though it meant a rejection of God as the king of the nation. It was permitted in spite of the trouble it would afterward bring to the nation. It was permitted, not determined, by the same God who made man a creature with a free will.

One's life may be lived in the **determinative** or the **permissive** will of God. God has a plan for each life. If one submits to Him, His will is sure to express itself to his good and His glory. A person does not have to do God's will. He can insist upon his own way. His permissive will may permit him to do as he pleases, but it will be to his regret, if one does not live as God directs. What one gains by disobedience will not be worth what he misses.

Israel insisted upon her determined course to have a king as the other nations. God consented. He reserved the right, however, to designate which person would be her king. God informed Samuel that a certain young man from the tribe of Benjamin would come to him, “. . . and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people; Israel . . . for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me,” 9:16. So it was. A young man by the name of Saul came to enquire of certain livestock owned by his father, for they had strayed far from home. Samuel welcomed him, kept him overnight, and the next morning anointed him to be the king of Israel.

What does a newly anointed king do? Saul went back home. There was nothing else to do. He had not been ratified by the people. He was a king without a palace, a government, an army, or any of the agencies which make up a system of human government. He was a king without a kingdom. He went back home to help his father on the farm.

God's purpose in Saul was not fulfilled. When the proper time came, Samuel called the elders of Israel together. By some manner of choice, the tribe of Benjamin was selected from the twelve tribes. Next, the family of Matri of the tribe of Benjamin was chosen. Then among the men of the family, God caused Saul to be chosen. Samuel publicly anointed Saul as

king as he had before anointed him privately. All the people shouted, “God save the king.” Samuel wrote in a book the basic organization and laws of the kingdom and read it before the people. Then everyone went home. At last, Israel, like other nations, had a king.

Saul began well in his rule. He was surrounded by a band of men whose hearts God had touched. Each leader needs that kind of companionship and counsel.

Saul was personally prepared to be a good ruler. The Lord “gave him another heart” after he had been anointed by Samuel. The promise was fulfilled, **“The Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee . . . and (thou) shalt be turned into another man,”** I Samuel 10:6. Saul was filled with the Spirit of God; he prophesied among the prophets of God. There could be no better preparation for one who would rule God's people.

Does it appear that God's permissive will was as significant as His directive will? Not at all. It still would have been preferable, if Israel had not demanded a king. Saul began well, but he did not end well. God permitted the institution of a monarchy, equipping the first king with spiritual qualifications to rule, but He knew from the first the tragedy that would follow.

Saul began well, but he did not end well. He turned from obeying the voice of the Lord. He turned from dependence upon the Lord to dependence upon himself. He changed from a spirit of humility to a spirit of pride. Finally, **“ . . . the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him,”** I Samuel 16:14. From that time forth, Saul's days were numbered. His reign ended in tragedy.

Since God knew such a tragic end would come, why did He permit the kingdom to be established and Saul to be chosen? The Lord did not make it so; He permitted it to be so. One can see clearly the distinction between His **directive** will and His **permissive** will. He would have preferred for Israel to remain a theocracy, but He permitted her to become a monarchy. One should be careful that he does not insist upon his will above God's will. He just might let him have his way!

A warning of approaching judgment is a sign of mercy. God warned Israel that her determined course would lead to regret and sorrow. He likewise warns us when our course leads away from Him and His blessed way. Keep your heart open to Him. Heed His warnings. Follow His direction. His mercy is expressed in keeping us out of trouble as well as in delivering us in the midst of trouble. Never set your heart to be like other people. Demands for conformity have potential dangers.

## Questions

1. Who was Samuel?
2. What was the theocracy?
3. What was Israel's problem under the theocracy?
4. Why do the sons of a good man sometimes turn out bad?
5. How were Eli and Samuel different as fathers?
6. Why was Samuel so hesitant about giving Israel a king?
7. How was their insistence a rejection of God?
8. What is the distinction between God's **directive** will and His **permissive** will?
9. How was Saul chosen king? Does God still choose rulers?
10. What is the greatest lesson which you learned from this study?