

## Crisis of CONFIDENCE

1 Samuel 8,9

### SLIDE - SEARCH FOR A KING

We seem to have trouble trusting our leaders. In a few months we'll be back to the polls for a federal election. And my guess is most people will be voting for the person they mistrust the least. We don't trust our leaders. Leadership's the big issue we're looking at today. In particular, KINGSHIP.

### SLIDE – Rudd, Abbott

And it seems that when you're talking about leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The most important words are words like approval. And popularity. As opposed to the actual job our leaders are doing.

So as a leader do you concentrate on doing the best job....or do you concentrate on appearances? What makes it LOOK LIKE.. you're doing the best job?

It's a tough call. Because if it is about popularity. If it is about personal approval. You can be doing the best job in the world. But if you don't APPEAR TO BE. Or if you don't have a HIGH APPROVAL....you'll be out on your ear come election time. And then you won't be doing any good at all.

Have you noticed....we seem to have such a stranglehold on our leaders. That they dare not say what they really think. Even in a personal conversation. Lest it find its way into the news. And they find themselves out on the street. For being honest. It's a sign that we've got them on a tight reign.

And I guess it all comes down to trust doesn't it. And confidence. And democracy's a way of having leaders. But keeping them tightly checked. Because we're not all that big on trust.

Now when it comes to human leadership. That may well be as good as it gets.

But as we turn to chapter 8 of 1 Samuel. There's a surprise. Because there's a crisis of confidence in Samuel...as leader. Put it in perspective for you. Samuel's popularity's almost down at the Tony Abbot level. Or maybe I should say. At the Anna Bligh level. If you can believe it. And he's about to get the boot.

But you might remember. Samuel swooped into office as a hugely popular leader.

Of course he was a political appointment. The barren Hannah prayed and God at the same time gave Hannah a son, and Israel a leader. .... To take the place of the old and weak priest Eli and his wicked sons. And God appointed Samuel over the elders of Israel who'd been tossing the ark of God around like a good luck charm. Thinking they could manipulate God.

And Samuel's a bit like Moses. Which politically is pretty good in Israel. He listens to God. And he speaks God's words to God's people. And after the shambles of the ark affair. It's like cool water to parched lips. And he's the man.

And Samuel says to a people. A people defeated by the Philistines. A people living in constant fear. He says. Turn back to God. And they do. And he says throw out your idols. And they do.

And there in chapter 7 there's a great big get together. They turn up. All of Israel at a place called Mizpah right in the middle of the country. And they turn up to devote themselves to God under Samuel.

And even better. While the Israelites get together at Mizpah. The enemy get together over the next hill to attack with everything they've got. But God's people cry out to Samuel. Who cries out to God. Sacrifices a lamb.

And God delivers his people in a big way.

This is what it says in verse 10 of chapter 7.

That day the Lord thundered with loud thunder against the Philistines and threw them into such a panic that they were routed before the Israelites.

And you might recall Hannah's words.

SLIDE

Those who oppose the Lord will be shattered. He will thunder against them from heaven;

And that's what happens here under Samuel.

And the Philistines run like crazy. With Israel giving chase, doing the mop up.

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So under Samuel. There in verse 13 of chapter 7. Things are great. Highest approval rating since Moses or Joshua.

Throughout Samuel's lifetime, the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines. The towns from Ekron to Gath that the Philistines had captured from Israel were restored to her, and Israel delivered the neighboring territory from the power of the Philistines. And there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.

Verse 15 Samuel continued as judge over Israel all the days of his life.

We started with Hannah the barren woman. Living in a nation barren of leadership. And 8 chapters in ...here's the answer to both problems in the person of Samuel.

But ...as you turn to chapter 8 and you get to verse 4. All that's about the change. There's a posse of elders of Israel coming to Samuel's place. And you can imagine Samuel. He looks out the window. Here they are coming up the road. Beauty. Rubs his hands together. Must be time for a prayer meeting.

Come on in guys. What's on your mind?

But here's what they've got to say verse 5.

They said to him. Quote.

"You are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have."

It's not a prayer meeting at all. It's a tribal council. And the council's voted.

Now I'm sure that in the next congregational meeting they'll pass a motion to send a letter to thank Samuel for his efforts. But it's unanimous. It's time to move on.

The electorate has spoken. Eli, if you, and ah...God could just step aside that would be great. Don't get us wrong – you and God are a pretty good combination. But you know how it is. Times change. And everyone else has got a king. And so ... it's time to GET REAL.

Now surprise surprise, verse 6. This displeased Samuel. And he prays to God. And we'll have a listen in ...in a minute as Samuel talks to God.

But let me just point out...that what the elders are saying is actually true. Samuel's old. That's true. We're told that there at the start of chapter 8. And they're right. His sons are pretty bad eggs. They're corrupt. We're told that as well. Samuel's made them judges like him. But they're not like him at all.

Which in a way reminds you of the situation with old Eli and his sons.

And as the elders club together to before Samuel. That's their angle. Samuel you're old and, well, lets face it - you'll probly drop off your perch before long. So we need someone to replace you. And heaven forbid your rotten sons ruling us. We'd be back to square one.

And when you put it like that. It almost sounds reasonable. Almost sounds Godly. Until we listen in to this conversation between Samuel and God. And you find out what's really going on.

And so Samuel prays to God. Maybe feeling a bit sorry for himself. And here's God's response verse 7. He says to Samuel. "Listen to all that the people are

saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. “

That’s what’s really going on.

It’s not all about you Samuel. Well, it is. But only by association. It’s ME God says.

As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking ME and serving other gods, so they are doing to you.

Samuel, you’re just the meat in the sandwich.

See the leadership crisis in Israel comes down to this. The vote of no confidence in Samuel is a thinly veiled vote of no confidence in the Lord their God. It’s a crisis of FAITH.

I mean how can you get on in this world, how can you be safe, how can you be secure without a KING? How can we know we’re safe unless we’ve got a thousand horses and chariots? More than that....How can we be SOMEBODIES in this world....without a king?

But of course. That’s the point of being God’s people. Their security. Their safety. Their importance. Comes from being different. From having GOD AS KING.

Moses before they go into the land

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**Deuteronomy 14:2** ...you are a people holy to the LORD your God. Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the LORD has chosen you to be his treasured possession.

God's people are special precisely because God is their King. And he's chosen them. To be with them.

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God's people have SAFETY. God's people have SECURITY. Because God's in their midst in the tabernacle. And the irony is. That's exactly how they're enjoying peace right now....under Samuel. Because they're living with God as their King.

But they want a king.

And they're rejecting ME God says.

That's the real leadership crisis. The question for the leaders of Israel. For the people of Israel. Is the same question for you. When it comes to the crunch. Can you trust God to be king? Can you trust him?

I mean it's great to have God there to SAVE YOU when you need him isn't it. It's great to have him to put things right. It's great to have him to mop up all your problems and tell you you're very very special. But to let him rule as king. To trust him for the most important decisions. Even with your very life. Your LIVELIHOOD. To place all that in HIS HANDS....well it's not that easy.

And you might sympathise.

It's a bit like taking both hands off the reins.

I'm quite happy with God in the car. He's a pretty good passenger. HE's pretty useful to have along on the trip. But there's no way he's getting behind the wheel.

That's the crisis. If you are a control freak. It's hard to have God as your KING.

So Samuel don't take it personally. They're rejecting me. But despite that. God says. Listen to them. Which is a little bit surprising. When maybe you're expecting a little bit of thunder and lightning.... After a request like that. Verse 9.

Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will do.

And there's a list from verse 11. Have a listen and see if you can pick up a bit of a theme.

**1 Samuel 8:11-18** <sup>1</sup> He said, "This is what the king who will reign over you will do:

He will TAKE your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses, and they will run in front of his chariots. <sup>12</sup> Some he will assign to be commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and others to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and still others to make weapons of war and equipment for his chariots.

<sup>13</sup> He will TAKE your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers.

<sup>14</sup> He will TAKE the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his attendants.

<sup>15</sup> He will TAKE a tenth of your grain and of your vintage and give it to his officials and attendants. <sup>16</sup> Your menservants and maidservants and the best of your cattle and donkeys he will TAKE for his own use.

<sup>17</sup> He will TAKE a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his SLAVES.

<sup>18</sup> When that day comes, you will cry out for relief from the king you have chosen, and the LORD will not answer you in that day."

I'm going to give you a king God says. The kind of king you're asking for in my place. But know this. He will take and take and take. And you'll be his slaves. You're asking for a kind of voluntary slavery.

But that's what they want.

So Verse 19 Samuel warns the people.

**1 Samuel 8:19-22** <sup>19</sup> But the people refused to listen to Samuel. "No!" they said. "We WANT... a king over us. <sup>20</sup>

And here's the key thing. Second time this little phrase has come up.

Then we will be LIKE ALL THE OTHER NATIONS, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles."

We'll do whatever it takes. To be the same as everyone else.

So be it. And Samuel sends them all back home.

One of Cathy's uncles remembers taking a puff of a cigarette when he was pretty little. And his dad caught him. And instead of taking it off him. He made him

smoke the whole thing. Which of course made him feel sick. Which is the point. Sometimes God graciously lets us suffer the consequences for our decisions.

And God's people are determined to learn the hard way.

And maybe sometimes you and I are too.

And it's interesting...because way back in Deuteronomy..before they even went into the land. God said this through Moses. He said.

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**Deuteronomy 17:14-15** <sup>14</sup> When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you and have taken possession of it and settled in it, and you say, "Let us set a king over us like all the nations around us," <sup>15</sup> be sure to.....

And there's a list of rules for kings. As if somehow he already knew this is how things would go. Which of course shouldn't surprise us because that would make him God. Which he is.

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He knew this day would come. He knew what they were like. And he knows what their kings will be like.

And as you push forward about 20 generations. The kings don't provide peace or security, or a name for Israel. But only ruin. And all Israel is taken into captivity.

But Israel is searching for a King. And that's what the rest of 1 and 2 Samuel is about. The search for a king.

And they'll get what they asked for. But at the same time. God has plans for his people. They might get the king they're asking for. But God's going to give them the king they need. Under king David. And of course. David's just the forerunner to the King of Kings. Who of course. They reject as well.

And if Samuel felt rejected. How much more Jesus. As they hung him there on a cross. With the mocking sign above his head. The king of the Jews.

The shocking reality of the cross is the same as the shocking reality of the peoples request in 1 Samuel.

As the crowd shout to Pilate for Jesus to be crucified. It's the same request. We do not want Jesus as our king. Away with him.

But of course. According to Romans 5. Despite our reckless sinful rejection of God and his king that we haven't asked for. In Jesus...he's given us the King we desperately need.

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It was while we were still sinners that Christ died for us.

He's the king who paid the price of sin in his death. Who defeated death in his death. Who offers us life and a place in his kingdom because he was raised. If we'll have him as king over us.

Jesus didn't come to win votes. HE didn't come to get a high approval rating, or to be popular. He marched into Jerusalem like a warrior into battle. To die on a cross. Because he came to be the king that gives. And doesn't take.

Which is an important thing to grasp. To be one of God's people. Is to have God as your king. It's not about rule keeping.

And you're not a Christian because you keep to a set of moral principles. There's only one thing that makes you a Christian. And that is. Jesus is your KING.

He's not just your mate. He's not your spiritual guru. He's not just a guide. He's not just your moral example. You need to be clear on this. If Jesus is not your KING. You're not a Christian. Simple as that. If he's not your king. You are not a subject in his kingdom.

The apostle Paul says this in Romans 10.

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**Romans 10:9** <sup>9</sup> ... if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Which is a great thing to be reminded of. If you've been treating him like an ACCESSORY.

If Jesus is your king. The keys to the kingdom are yours. The promises to Abraham are true for you. So make sure you're living like it. And not hedging your bets.

If Jesus is your king. Then he's king over how you spend your money. Over how you treat your family. And your workmates. HE's king over what kind of movies you watch. And what you look at on the internet. HE's king over how you spend your time. And over your goals. Which is a good thing. Which should make you different, not the same as everyone else.

Now let me just acknowledge. And I think it's helpful to say. Sometimes it's not that easy. When you're having a tough time. It's hard to see how your king is delivering you. When you're suffering in some way. And for the life or you you can't see the good. Sometimes it's hard. When the lights of the world seem to glitter. When others seem to do as they please. When And it looks like they're living the good life. And you persevere in obedience. And in prayer. And in humble service. Sometimes it's hard. But as you look to your king who gave everything for you. Take heart. And persevere. Be reminded that ultimately anything else is a sure road to slavery. And it will not give you what you really need. It will only take.

Jesus is the king worth trusting.

Amen.