



# CAPITOL COMMISSION

Government Growth and Freedom Limitations (I Samuel 8:1-22)

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*Capitol Commission state directors are missionaries who teach weekly verse-by-verse Bible studies for legislators, lobbyists, and staff members. These Bible studies are hand-distributed to each legislative office, emailed, and made available throughout the Capitol community. The love and grace of God compels us to proclaim the truth of the Gospel with a heartfelt compassion for the Capitol community, to faithfully teach and apply the Word of God, and it is our desire to build meaningful relationships that bear fruit for an eternity to come.*

With the Bible as our foundation and authority, the mission of Capitol Commission is obedience to the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) within the Capitol communities of the world. We are not a lobbying group attempting to garner votes or reform society. Our mandate is to see the hearts and lives of elected officials transformed with the Word of God. Capitol Commission is a ministry of the church seeking to proclaim the gospel message, and to help believers mature through the verse-by-verse teaching of Scripture. In the Bible, we see God's great love for the world, especially for those who have been placed in authority. This is the foundation for our ministry to you.

The church is instructed to submit and to honor government leaders (Rom 13:1-7), and as a matter of first importance, to pray for their salvation (1 Tim 2:1-4). Our desire is witness God transform the hearts and lives of elected officials, lobbyists, and staff members. We apply this mandate to four major areas of making disciples: (1) *evangelize* those who have not experienced saving faith in Jesus Christ; (2) *establish* those who desire to grow in their faith and knowledge of Scripture; (3) *equip* those called to spiritual leadership; and, (4) *encourage* churches to participate with us in ministry.

## Introduction

Prior to the events of chapter 8, God ruled Israel (theocracy) under leaders such as Moses and the judges. The transition to monarchy (rule by kings) began with Saul, and continued with David in chapter 16. The actions of Saul in chapters 9-15 demonstrate why God rejected him. Saul's successes (chs. 8—11), confirmation (ch. 12), and his failures (chs. 13-15) have much to teach us (and those lessons will be emphasized in the continuation of the 1 Samuel study).

## WHEN EXPEDIENCY IS ADORATED

(8:1-9) Judges and officers were appointed for each town and tribe. They were to pursue "justice, *and only* justice" (Deut 16:18-20). Samuel's sons were appointed in Beersheba in the Negev Desert (approximately 48 miles south of Jerusalem, and a place of importance to Abraham and Isaac; see Gen 21:22-31; 26:23-33). It is stated twice (8:3, 5) that Samuel's sons, Joel and Abijah, did not walk in their father's ways. "They turned aside after dishonest gain and took bribes and perverted justice" (8:3).

Samuel's sons "turned aside," after they had been appointed judges. Apparently, there was not a question with regard to their character prior to the appointment. They drifted from God's will and subjected themselves to the problems such actions inevitably create. The warning in Hebrews 2:1-4 is therefore instructive. "For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will." You and I must also give careful attention to Scripture, so we do not drift. We must always be examining our lives and our motivations each and every day so that we are certain to be under the authority and blessing of the precious Word of God.

It is also noteworthy that the life standard appears to be Samuel. His sons are said not to have walked "in his ways." One should expect to read that Joel and Abijah were corrupt because they did not walk in the *Lord's* way. Perhaps Samuel did not instruct his sons, just as Eli had failed. Setting an example *without* instruction will only result in imitation. Our lives must also be accompanied with instruction in God's Word. We are wise to give "closer attention" to Scripture.

Once the complaints were brought to their attention, the "elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel." (The last mention of the elders as a group was in Deuteronomy 31:28.) There is an indication of frustration and weariness in the words of verse 5 ("you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now. . ."). The people were no longer willing to tolerate corrupt leadership. Hundreds of years earlier, the request for a king was already anticipated. Deuteronomy 17:14-15 reads, "When you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, and you possess it and live in it, and you say, 'I will set a king over me like all the nations who are around me,' you shall surely set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses. . . ." The request for new leadership was valid, but the response to the need was not.

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CAPITOL COMMISSION BIBLE STUDIES ~ GEORGIA

LEGISLATORS AND LOBBYISTS: TUESDAYS @ 7:30AM, 514 CLOB (DURING THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION)

STAFF: TUESDAYS @ NOON, 514 CLOB (AFTER THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION - CURRENTLY IN TEMPORARY FURLOUGH)

The “elders of Israel” sought to correct a wrong without the right motivation. In the current crisis, there was no outcry to God for deliverance—no prayer or seeking the will of the Lord. The people demanded a king who would institute a new form of government. The trust was displaced in the government, as opposed to the provision of God. The demand was for a king “like all the nations” who would provide administration to the legal system, and political might to defeat any oppressive enemies. Such a request “was displeasing in the sight of Samuel” (8:6). Nevertheless, he acted wisely by praying to the Lord. God’s response demonstrates that the motivation of the elders to correct a wrong was in itself wrong. The demand was carnal and selfish.

God replied to Samuel, “they have rejected Me from being king over them” (8:7; cf. Ps 118:8-9; 146:3). The one who represents God may expect rejection, when God is rejected. From the day that the Lord delivered Israel from Egypt until the current time, the people had forsaken God and “served other gods” (8:8). The people did not seek God’s help, but were more interested in telling God what should be the manner of His help. The people sought a savior, but foolishly demanded the form of salvation. The answer seemed logical and reasonable to Israel, but was completely devoid of trust in God. The Lord instructed Samuel to listen to the people, but “solemnly warn them and tell them of the procedure of the king who will reign over them” (8:9).

## WHEN WISDOM IS IGNORED

(8:10-22) “So Samuel spoke all the words of the LORD to the people who had asked of him a king” (8:10). The words are a sober warning with regard to what the people would receive from a king. The warning states six times that he “will take” (8:11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17). The king will be a “taker” who would diminish the interests of others for his own. Samuel urged the people to realize that they would lose their freedom and prosperity if they chose a king to rule them.

Moreover, the king would establish a permanent bureaucracy, force sons to serve in the army, take children from families, impose excessive taxation, and reduce individual wealth. The bureaucracy would be based upon two branches of government: military and administrative. The king would establish a permanent military, and the people would be forced to serve (8:11-12). His demand for administrative support would be from the general population (8:13, 16). The king would also take the best fields and vineyards for his possession (8:14). His subjects would pay a “tenth” of their grain, vintage, and flocks (8:15, 17). The people would become his slaves (8:17). God warned the people that refusal to heed His warning will cause an outcry to the Lord, but He “will not answer” in that day (8:18).

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THEY DID NOT WANT TO BE OPPRESSED BY THE PHILISTINES, SO THEY SUFFERED UNDER THE OPPRESSION OF THEIR OWN CENTRAL GOVERNMENT. THE PEOPLE WOULD NOT ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR OWN CHOICES.

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Despite the solemn warning, “the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel,” and demanded a king (8:19). They wanted to “be like all the nations,” and have a king to judge them and lead them in battle (8:20). The people desired security more than they desired God. The Israelites trusted an institution more than God. They did not want to be oppressed by the Philistines, so they suffered under the oppression of their own central government. The people would not accept responsibility for their own choices.

The growth of government that is described in verses 11-17 would ultimately result in the limitation of many freedoms. The social evils that are condemned by the prophets originated ultimately from the powers of an unlimited government. The people could not complain because they brought the situation on themselves. The monarchy will be characterized by continual decline because the people rejected God.

Samuel repeated the words of the people to the Lord. God would “appoint them a king,” but would do so according to His choice. God is always sovereign, yet humanity is accountable to Him. According to chapter 9, Saul would become king of Israel. Saul, however, did not seek God for wisdom but relied solely upon himself. The kingdom of Israel would eventually be defeated and divided, and the Israelites would be taken into captivity.

The people believed they could receive something for nothing. They believed the protection and security of a king would be without cost, but they suffered under his oppression. The rejection of God and lack of personal responsibility resulted in the destruction of the social order and the kingdom. The same experience occurs today when we seek something for nothing. The modern form of a king is a government bureaucracy. When the wisdom of God’s Word is ignored here in 1 Samuel 8, we may expect lower standards of living and limits of our freedom. God’s Word reveals to us how easy it is for our trust to be misplaced; it also reveals what occurs when we want to be like everyone else, and resist the wisdom of God when it does not agree with our opinion.

Idolatry can be rather sophisticated and seem both logical and responsible. God’s Word alone can help us discern our idolatry (8:7-8). May we tremble at the thought that our actions and words could be hateful toward God by not seeking His authority and help (cf. Luke 19:14).