**Week Six – September 27/28 – I Samuel 7-8**

**Warm up question and Introduction - If a friend complimented your approach to life, which compliment are they more likely to use, “\_\_\_\_\_\_ is crazy adaptable and can change quickly depending on the situation” or “\_\_\_\_\_\_ is solid and steady; a unchanging friend that is there and consistent”?** These next two chapters are times of great change as the Israelites run to God and then a chapter later are retreating into their own preferences.The last sentence of verse 2 is an abrupt report of a seismic shift, “Then all the people of Israel turned back to the Lord.” Sweeping stubbornness and rebellion is followed by sweeping repentance and revival. **If you can think of times in your life when you have turned away from God to go “on your own”, was that turning away a quick turn, slowly developing, or in between? If you can think of times in your life when you have realized your wandering and turned back toward God, was that turning a quick turn, slowly developing, or in between?** With the sensational things Israel has seen with the return of the ark, they return en masse. Unfortunately, only one chapter later they are on the run again, seeking their own desires.

**Read I Samuel 7:2-17 -** The Israelites run back to God

Samuel is finally back. We haven't seen him since chapter 4 and he returns at a very hopeful moment as Israel shows a desire to reconnect with God. We see in this chapter two signposts in connecting or reconnecting with God - repentance and intercession.

**Repentance** - We have no evidence of Samuel calling the people to repent, but as they repent Samuel (v. 3) does provide the next practical steps for the people to turn back to God. He tells them to put away their idols and false gods. **How would you describe true repentance? How do you know whether or not your repentance is genuine?** **Have you ever found yourself being sorry for something but not truly repenting? If a prophet came to this generation to aid us in our repentance, what things might we be told to “put away”?**

Two New Testament passages about repentance:

* **Read 2 Corinthians 7:8-10. What is the difference between the two types of sorrows being compared in verse 10? How does Paul emphasize that these differences can be found in both intent and result?**
* **Read Luke 15:7.** Soak in how astonishing the picture is here. 99 people stand before you in a moment where it seems that they have no visible presenting sin. Seems pretty great, right? But there is one other person who sins, but then turns to God with a heart of repentance. **Which of these two (the 99 or the 1) does Jesus point us towards emulating and why? What does it tell you about the heart of God when you hear that one person who has sinned and repented brings about more rejoicing than 99 who seem to be temporarily “successful” at sin avoidance/sin hiding?**

**Intercession** - Not only do the people repent, but the additional beauty of the moment comes in when Samuel offers to intercede for them (verse 5). **Building on Samuel’s offer to intercede for them, what kind of intercession are they asking him to bring (verse 8)**? (*non stop, ongoing*) What an amazing scene we get of Samuel praying and sacrificing to the Lord on behalf of Israel and God responding. This account is fully realized in Christ who was himself the sacrifice and who intercedes on our behalf. In Christ we have access to even greater intercession than they had:

* **Read Romans 8:31-34. What are some of the phrases in 31-33 that express the riches of what Christ has secured for us in his death and resurrection? How does the language like “bring any charge against” and “condemns” highlight even further how amazing it is that Jesus is actually interceding for you?**
* **Read Hebrews 7:23-25.** This verse highlights the permanence and completeness of the salvation that Christ has secured for us. And yet even after such a great and generous work is given to those who receive him, he still does not rest. He continues to intercede for us as well. **As Satan constantly seeks to accuse us before God and bring temptation, in what ways can take heart in and stand upon the truth of these verses in Romans and Hebrews?**

**Read Chapter 8 -** The Israelites return to a trust of only what they can see

Notice the deja vu as you **read v. 1-5** - Eli was a trusted man of God, but his Kryptonite was placing his ungodly sons in leadership. Here we see the same problem developing in and around Samuel. Samuel’s inaction to correct this problem opens the door for Israel to rationalize why they need a king. But this does not make Israel’s choice right. Life is full of moments where we rationalize a dumb choice because of a non-ideal choice that came before:

* I hit my brother because he hit me first
* I am so embarrassed because of what I just said, but I said it because I was jealous
* I knew it was wrong, but I did it because I saw someone else do it and “got away with it”
* I know I shouldn’t have responded that way, I did it because I was so angry at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

The big “because” the Israelites use here is that because Eli’s sons are in leadership and are jerks, the Israelites should be exempt from following an unseen God and be like other nations - allowed to fully trust a visible king instead of fully trusting an invisible God.

**Read v. 6-9**. **How does God counsel Samuel as Samuel struggles with Israel’s rebellion and God allowing them to “have their way”? What, if anything, surprises you about all that God speaks to Samuel about the situation?**

**Read v. 10-18**. God reminds them here the steep price they will pay to get the king that they are begging for. **As you read the litany of all the repercussions of the people getting what they want, which 2 or 3 seem to be the hardest prices to pay and why?**

**Read v. 19-22.** Verse 19 is so cringeworthy - the people have heard why their approach to a king is a bad idea, yet they charge ahead. **Do you remember a time in life when God gave you a “yellow light” or a “red light” yet you charged ahead anyway? What did that look like and what did you learn?**

**What is Israel’s reason for desiring to have a king over them?** (*Because all the other nations have one - both in verse 5 and 20. Israel’s desire is to be like the rest of the world*.) **What are modern examples of the same problem - instead of wanting a physical king to go before us in battle, what are the ways today that we succumb to just wanting to be like others instead of trusting and following God?**

**Conclusion** - Which of these is God impressing upon you to give attention to this week:

* Soften my heart so that I am ready to answer calls of repentance that God may be speaking to me.
* Stop trying to earn my status with God, because it is his work that saves me. I want to remember that not only is the salvation he has given me complete, but that he also intercedes for me.
* Shed off desires to be like others instead of doing the less popular road of fully trusting God.