

A Good Way or God's Way?

Scripture Reading: I Samuel 8:1-22

Samuel faithfully represented God to the people of Israel. Israel had a hard time being faithful to God. If you look at the book of Judges, you will see a pattern. Israel would rebel. God would carry out retribution. Israel would repent. God would restore. This cycle was repeated many times. Though Samuel was faithful to God, and to Israel, he did have a problem with his two sons that were trying to emulate Samuel's authority without emulating his godly character. The elders of Israel had a legitimate concern. As Samuel was aging, it was apparent that these two sons were not fit to take their father's place of leadership. Something must be done. This is where the elders failed. They should have asked of the Lord what should be done. Instead they came to the table with their own plan. They wanted to replace the spiritual leadership of Samuel with a King and be like other nations. In desiring a King, they were not only by-passing the way in which Samuel served them, they were rejecting God's timing and plan for Israel.

In I Samuel 8:5, there are two problems with the demands of the elders of Israel:

They wanted to be like other nations. They were not consulting God. They were looking at bettering themselves by imitation of other nations. They did not appreciate the unique relationship that Israel had with God. They were privileged above all nations (Deuteronomy 4:20; 14:2; 26:18-19; 33:1-3,28-29; Isaiah 43:21; 46:13 cp. Numbers 23:7-9).

They wanted a king, NOW! The truth is that God had already planned that Israel would have a king – in His timing (Deuteronomy 17:14-20). David is the man of God's choosing. But David is not ready to be king, yet. By rushing God and making demands, they would get Saul – a king that would be used to teach Israel some hard lessons, rather than prosper them. God warned them. Saul's administration is described in I Samuel 8:7-18. After **this** king that they asked for, Israel will be ready to receive David – a man after God's own heart (I Samuel 13:13-14).

I Samuel 12:1-25 – Though the people of Israel were impulsive and rebellious, Samuel found opportunities to teach them. The people soon figured out that their choice was a wrong one. God demonstrated His displeasure in a very physical way. Notice that God's man rebuked them, but he also stayed faithful to them. He would minister to them by teaching them and praying for them. **See I Samuel 12:16-25.** Note how Samuel is, with Israel, like Christ is with His church (I Samuel 12:20-23 cp. John 10:1-5,27; Hebrews 13:20-21; Ephesians 5:25-27; Hebrews 7:25).

Samuel prayed for his nation. Are we praying for our nation? I Samuel 12:23; II Chronicles 7:13-14; I Timothy 2:1-8; Luke 18:1-8.

Our nation has never been / never will be God's chosen nation, like Israel. Nevertheless, God has blessed it and has used it in many wonderful ways. Our nation is turning from God (Psalm 9:17, 20). How shall we pray for it?

A Spiritual Approach to Praying for Our Nation

An Overview of the Christian Community, our Society, and our Nation.

Begin with the House of God – How has our testimony been?

Consider I Peter 4:17; Matthew 5:13-16; I Corinthians 10:31-33

Prayer for ministries and those who are persecuted. – Spiritual warfare!

Consider I Timothy 2:8; Ephesians 6:10-13,18-20; II Thessalonians 3:1-2; Hebrews 13:3

Society – Is there humility and fear of the Lord?

Proverbs 14:34; Psalm 9:15-20; 119:53,126; Romans 3:9-19; II Timothy 2:24-26

Government – God-ordained human authority!

Consider Psalm 2:10-12; Daniel 4:34-37; I Timothy 2:1-6; Romans 13:1-7; Proverbs 21:1; Isaiah 2:1-4; Revelation 11:15-18.

Issues of the Heart.

Issues and Anger / The Strife of Tongues – Focusing on just a few issues often leads to the reduction of reasonable thinking, and to words and terms that lose their meaning and become inflammatory bombs that polarize people. Terms like “racist,” “Black Lives Matter.” “we believe science,” and many more. Name-calling and clichés do not promote intelligent and helpful communication. The public debates and many video clips on the news media should illustrate this. From the public arena to private conversations, clear thinking and calm dialogue are at a premium. Mockery, threats, and various forms of harm / violence have often been the results.

Consider Psalm 1:1; 31:18-20; 56:1-5; Isaiah 26:3; Philippians 2:14-15; 4:4-8; Titus 3:1-2; James 1:19-20; 3:1-6,13-18.

Fear and Panic / Emotional reaction – Without trying to identify a master plot of men, we will just go to the source, Satan, as the author of confusion. People cannot think, speak, or behave well in the midst of a chaotic atmosphere. Do we fear man? Do we desire to please man? Do we base our hope in man? – or Do we fear the Lord? Do we desire to please the Lord? Do we base our hope on the Lord?

Consider I John 4:18; 5:18-20; II Corinthians 4:3-4; Ephesians 2:2-3; Hebrews 2:9,14-15; I Corinthians 14:33; Psalm 34:4-8; 37:1-11; Proverbs 1:33; 3:13-26; 29:25-26.

Lies and Deception – The tongue is considered one of the deadliest weapons in the world. The heart is described as deceitful above all things and desperately wicked – undiscernible to all except God. The work of the Gospel (evangelism and revival) is the only hope to change people's hearts. Then, a better government might develop in our nation.

Consider Psalm 57:4; 58:3-4; John 8:44 (cp. 30-36,47); Jeremiah 17:9-10 (cp. Romans 3:10-18; 6:17-18); I Corinthians 6:9-11; II Corinthians 5:17; 10:3-5.

Courage, Faith, and Positive Action – The danger with all the previous topics above is that people could become cynical, withdrawn, and uninvolved. These times require that people find strength in the character and promises of God. People must depend on God and yield themselves to be used of God.

Consider Psalm 10; 36; 37 (cp. 73); 94; Proverbs 28:28; Matthew 24:12; II Thessalonians 3:1-5; Hebrews 12:1-3; Psalm 27:1-3,11-14; I Corinthians 15:57-58; II Timothy 2:3-4; I John 5:3-5.