



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

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November 25, 2012

JUMP START #258

1 Sam. 8:4,5- “ Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah; and they said to him, ‘ Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now, appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations.’”

When Israel got the Ark of the Covenant back from the Philistines, some of the men of Israel looked inside the ark and God struck down more than 50,000 of them. The men of Beth-shemesh contacted the men of Kiriath-jearim to take the ark. They retrieved the ark and it stayed in that area for the next 20 years.

In the meantime, Israel is being led by Samuel, who serves as a judge and priest. Samuel has been faithful to the Lord and his ways. He has served for a long time. He’s old and his time left on earth is short. His natural successors would be his sons. But his sons are pitiful and unfaithful. Again, like with Eli, we see a faithful servant of God whose kids have no regard for the Lord. What a disaster! Few things could hurt more than trying to lead a nation, or a church and to know your own children are not following. The tears and prayers at night from this godly man would be enough to make the angels weep.

The leaders of Israel do not want Samuel’s sons to lead them. The last time worthless sons took over, in the case of Eli’s family, the nation was punished and lost a battle to the Philistines. History is a great teacher. Not again. So they want Samuel to appoint a king. This news breaks the heart of Samuel. God speaks and tells Samuel that the people have rejected him from being their king.

Several things of interest are found here:

1. The people don’t ask Samuel, they tell him. Samuel is the mediator between Israel and God. So, in telling Samuel, they are telling God. Folks do the same thing today in prayer. They don’t ask, they tell. They demand. They expect. And when it doesn’t come about, they pout and get mad. Have we, like Israel, forgotten who is the Lord? Have we gotten so casual in our relationship that we treat God as an equal or one of our buddies? I hate the flippant tone that some talk and write about God today. You won’t find that in the book of Psalms. There you see this great devotion, respect and love for the Lord. There they understood that he is the God of all Heaven and earth. They understood that God was upon the throne. It is a marvel that God even turns his ear toward us.

2. The people wanted a king like the nations around them. Israel had a king—it was God. God was not like the other kings—first and foremost, because he was God. But Israel wanted a king that they could see. They wanted a king who would lead the troops into battle. They wanted a king like the nations around them. And what was that like? Those kings were corrupt, they were immoral, they killed on a rumor or whim, they assassinated one another, they suppressed the people. That's what the other kings were like. But people are like that. There is an old expression, "Keeping up with the Jones'," which implies, being like those about you. Financial talk show guru Dave Ramsey, says, "average in America is overweight and broke." Don't measure your life by others. I don't want a church like the churches around us. I want a church that pleases God. I don't want a marriage like everyone else. I want it to be pleasing to the Lord. I don't want to live like everyone else, I want to live like God wants me to.

That may mean you do things differently than most others. That may mean that those close to you think you are taking things a bit too seriously. It may mean that they don't understand why you are doing what you are doing. But they don't have to. You want to walk with the Lord. You want to please God. There's more to life than going to work and coming home and watching TV until bedtime and then doing the same thing all over again. You are interested in making a difference in the lives of others. You want to connect both with God and others. Israel failed to see that they were not a nation like the other nations. They were chosen by God. He had led them and protected them. He had given them his law. But Israel fought that and didn't want that. Leave us alone and let us be like everyone else was their thought. How shallow. How vain. How blind to the blessings that they had.

Are we any different? I hope so. It is a matter of choice—the very choices you make today.

Roger Shouse