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Choices Have Consequences

Although we don't normally realize it, everything we do is chocked full of choices. Our morning routine is probably carried out as much by habit as by anything else we do, but those habits resulted from choices made at one time or another. Something as simple as brushing your teeth involves many choices. Whether to use a soft or hard bristle brush, the brand and flavor of toothpaste, the method of brushing (back and forth or up and down), and whether or not to floss are choices that we have made at one time or another. Most of our choices do not seem to have lasting significance, although, in the above example, how we treat our teeth can determine how long we will have them. Occasionally, we come across choices that have lasting and even eternal significance. These choices need to have care consideration in the decisions we make.

The most crucial choice that anyone will ever make is whether to commit his or her life to God through Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The eternal destiny of each one of us depends on that choice. In our study of the nation of Israel, we see them coming to great decision points on a number of occasions. The decision to leave Egypt, the decision to accept the Ten Commandments, and the decision NOT to go into the Promised Land the first time are examples of tough choices that had important consequences. We can remember the story of how Joshua called the people together and challenged them to choose whom they would serve as he said, "Choose ye this day, whom you will serve, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Later on during the time of Samuel the people came to another significant decision point.

I SAMUEL 7:15-17 Samuel was an unusual person. His very birth was an answer to prayer by his mother and she had promised to give him to God's service even before he was born. Samuel grew up in the Temple being trained by Eli and succeeded Eli as priest and judge of Israel since Eli's sons proved to be unfit for the job. Samuel was one an example of a circuit judge that traveled from place to place to hold court. The circuit did not co-ver all of Israel; however, people could come to where he lived in Ramah for decisions. Samuel also functioned as a priest for the people and a prophet to them. His priestly duties were carried out in conjunction with the altar he build at Ramah.

I SAMUEL 8:1-3 This was de-finitely not a case of "like father, like son." Samuel's sons were not dedicated to following God. They had chosen to use their positions for selfish purposes and the result was that such behavior ruined the functioning of the govern-mental system. The were enticed by the possibility of being wealthy and took money from people to give favorable decisions. There is no system of government that can function when there are corrupt people operating it. We this even in our own system. Groups buy influence for legislation that is favorable to their objectives through contributions and entertainment of government officials. As a consequence, we wind up with less than ideal laws and regulations. In the case of Samuel and his sons, we do not know if he was occupied with being a judge, priest and prophet that he did not spend adequate time with his sons or why they went awry, but they did .

I SAMUEL 8:4-5 The leader of the people sent a delegation to Samuel to make him aware of the problem. It could have been that he did not realize what was going on. Many times the parents of errant children are the last to know.

The elders had serious concerns and they brought a proposal to Samuel. First of all, they recognized that he could not continue on forever in his role of judge in Israel. Next they realized that a judge would have to be honest and moral even as Samuel was; however, Samuel's sons were not that way. The main idea of their proposal was that they wanted a new form of government, one that would be like all the nations around them. To their credit, they had legitimately recognized and complained about a wrong that was being done. The problem came from their prescription of a worldly solution to the problem. We find ourselves do the same thing today. We can see pro-blems around us, but instead of trying to find God's solution and God's way, we turn elsewhere and try to apply our own remedy. A lot of well meaning people sincerely think this is what God wants us to do. You hear things such as, "After all, God did give us a brain and expects us to use it." True, God does want us to use our brains; how-ever, the way we are to use it is in finding and following His will. The de-sire to be like others is typically called the herd instinct and it is natural for dumb animals; but, we

are not dumb animals but are made in the image of God. If we really used our brains we could figure out that the majority is usually wrong. People are trying today to force us into more and more govern-mental influence in our lives that will lead us closer to a socialistic form of government like others have. If they would but look around, they would see that it doesn't work there. The elders of Israel could have looked around at their neighbors and determined that their own form of government was real-ly the best if they would but obey God.

I SAMUEL 8:6-9 Samuel was a great leader and a great person; how-ever, he was subject to being hurt when he felt rejected by people. Samuel saw this as rejection of himself and his leadership. Even though he was hurt, he did not answer the people immediately but turned to God to know His will in the matter. This is a great lesson for us. We cannot assume we know the situations that we find our-selves in. We need insight that is beyond ourselves and we get that by turning to God. God saw beyond the obvious and realized that what the people were rejecting was His Lordship.

God's answer to Samuel is truly frightening. If we approach God with a rebellious spirit asking for something that is not best for us, we just may get what we ask for. God said to Samuel, "Let them have their king, it will teach them a lesson, but first warn them of the consequences of their choice." God recognized this request as the culmination of all the rejection that had been going on since the people left Egypt. The seed of rebellion was there and now it was finally bring forth fruit.

Samuel told the people what it would be like to live under an earthly kings. Their sons and daughters would be pressed into the service of the king. Everything they had or earned would be taxed. The king would take the best of what they had and use it for his own purposes. Sounds, like the system we have today!

I SAMUEL 8:19-22 It didn't do any good to tell them the truth of the mat-ter. They already had their minds made up. Notice that not only did they want to be like the other nations, but they also wanted to have someone to do for them instead of having any responsibility themselves. "We want a king to fight our battles for us." This sounds very much like the cry today, "Let the government do it."

Samuel was still very much de-pendent on God. He took the people's reply back to God to see if there were any further instructions. The word of the Lord came back unchanged: "Let them have a king."

We need to keep in mind that our choices have consequences and we would do well to check out the consequences before we make the choice.