

**"A God Who Gives or a King Who Takes?"**

**1 Samuel 8:6–18**

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### **Background**

One of the most famous warnings ever issued about power comes from John Emerich Edward Dalberg-Acton, also known as Lord Acton: "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." Though Lord Acton was writing about unchecked political power, this tendency surfaces across virtually all levels and forms of power — including those accessible even to everyday citizens. But is this tendency irresistible? How does God, the most powerful being in all reality, use His power? Are there ways we can use power to God's glory and others' good? Join us this Sunday for the next installment of our miniseries, "Israel: Like All the Other Nations?"

### **Sermon Text 1 Samuel 8:6–18**

*<sup>6</sup> But when they said, "Give us a king to lead us," this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the Lord. <sup>7</sup> And the Lord told him: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. <sup>8</sup> As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you. <sup>9</sup> Now listen to*

*them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will claim as his rights."*

*<sup>10</sup> Samuel told all the words of the Lord to the people who were asking him for a king. <sup>11</sup> He said, "This is what the king who will reign over you will claim as his rights: He will take your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses, and they will run in front of his chariots. <sup>12</sup> Some he will assign to be commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and others to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and still others to make weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. <sup>13</sup> He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. <sup>14</sup> He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his attendants. <sup>15</sup> He will take a tenth of your grain and of your vintage and give it to his officials and attendants. <sup>16</sup> Your male and female servants and the best of your cattle and donkeys he will take for his own use. <sup>17</sup> He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his slaves. <sup>18</sup> When that day comes, you will cry out for relief from the king you have chosen, but the Lord will not answer you in that day."*

## **Discussion Questions**

### **1. Preparation**

- What is one thing you hoped to talk about today/tonight?
- What question(s) did you come away with from the sermon?
- What is the best thing you heard on Sunday?

### **2. Sunday Questions:**

#### **1. The Anatomy of Spiritual Amnesia**

The sermon emphasizes that **"so much of faith comes down to remembering."**

Yet, the Israelites quickly forgot the grueling reality of Egyptian bondage and demanded a king "like all the other nations," while Samuel temporarily forgot God's sovereignty due to personal offense.

- Why is the human heart so prone to "spiritual nearsightedness"—forgetting God's past deliverances the moment we face immediate anxiety or a new crisis?

- What practical "reminders" (like Moses and Miriam's song) can we build into our daily lives to anchor our hope when we are tempted to look to worldly solutions for security?

## 2. The Illusion of Flattering Statistics

In 1 Kings, we read that under Solomon, the people were as numerous as sand, "ate, drank, and were happy." On paper, the Israelite Empire was a massive success. Yet, underneath the surface, Solomon was breaking every rule in Deuteronomy—hoarding gold, importing Egyptian horses, and spending nearly double the time building his own palace compared to God's Temple.

- How do we distinguish between **genuine spiritual flourishing** and **worldly success** that secretly compromises our foundation?
- In what ways do we, as individuals or as a modern church culture, mistakenly celebrate "Solomon-like" metrics (wealth, size, power) while ignoring the subtle erosion of our core values?

## 3. "Pharaoh with an Israelite Beard"

Walter Brueggemann notes the tragic irony that Solomon recreated the exact "Egyptian reality" that Moses fought to escape. History is full of instances where oppressed groups eventually adopt the tools and behaviors of their oppressors once they gain authority.

- Why is it so easy to recreate the "logic of Empire" in our own families, workplaces, or ministries once we are given power?
- How do we safeguard our hearts against becoming the very thing we once resisted, and ensure our leadership style reflects God's freedom rather than a new version of bondage?

## 4. The "Taking" King vs. The "Giving" God

Samuel warns the people by repeating the word "**take**" six times, detailing how a human king will slowly consume their sons, daughters, fields, and freedom to maintain his own status. In contrast, Jesus uses His absolute power to serve, heal, and ultimately give His life away.

- When you examine your current lifestyle, career goals, or security blankets, are you leaning more on systems that *take* from others to protect you, or on the God who *gives*?
- What does it look like to consciously opt out of the predatory "logic of Empire" in an economic and social world that tells us we must hoard resources to be safe?

## **5. Reimagining Personal Power**

The sermon closes with a challenge: *"We may not be kings or queens in a political sense, but there are other forms of power."* Philippians 2 calls us to emulate Christ, who did not use His equality with God to His own advantage but "made himself nothing" by taking the nature of a servant.

- What specific forms of "power" do you possess (e.g., socioeconomic privilege, institutional authority, specialized knowledge, social connections, or simply your time)?
- What is one practical way you can leverage or surrender that power this week to elevate, serve, or deliver someone else, rather than using it to secure your own comfort?