



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH

SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

Shattered Nation

When life goes to pieces | Part 4

Steve Lombardo | October 18, 2015 | 1 Samuel 8



Here at Village Bible Church we're in a series talking about brokenness and being shattered to pieces. The reality is that bad things happen to all people. Be very wary of any Christian who comes up to you and says that if you're a believer that bad things won't come your way. "If you do the right things, say the right prayers and give enough gifts then God will pour blessings and prosperity upon you. You will not experience the pain of this life." How many people have experienced brokenness in their lives? Virtually everybody.

I remember when I first experienced real, deep brokenness. It was around the year 2000 when my sister was admitted to the hospital and diagnosed with a rare blood disorder. About a month or two after that she went into a coma and had emergency brain surgery to save her life. It was then discovered that she had inoperable brain cancer. I was talking with my dad, who is a pastor, and was questioning, "Where is God? Our family has lived for the Lord and tried to do what's right. And now this is happening?" This was happening to my sister who was adopted from Hong Kong when she was a little girl. She never knew her biological parents and now she had inoperable brain cancer. "God, where are You?" At that point a shattered brokenness entered into our family. Thinking those thoughts revealed that I didn't really understand how God works or Who God really is.

My thinking was more in line with the moralistic deism that many reformed pastors speak on today. Moralistic deism is the belief that God is out there somewhere, but He's not really involved in our lives as long as we do the right things. If we do the right things He'll provide for us. He'll take care of us and we'll be okay. In some odd way I had put God in my debt, thinking that God owed me something or that he owed our family something. The problem is God is in no one's debt, yet we are ever in debt to Him.

Just as a word of testimony my sister is alive and doing well today, 15 years later, when 98% of people who are diagnosed with what she had are gone in two years. Praise the Lord! He is good. But would I be able to say that if she was gone in two years?

This is a series from 1 Samuel where we go to places that are uncomfortable. We sit in places that hurt and are hard. In the beginning of the series we talked about "Shattered Expectations." Hannah wanted to have kids but couldn't. Her life was turned upside down. She was blessed with a child named Samuel but things didn't turn out exactly the way she had hoped. Tim talked about "Shattered Parenting" in relation to Eli's sons and how they rebelled against him. Last week we learned about "Shattered Religion" by looking at the nation of Israel. Today we will talk about "Shattered Nation" by looking at 1 Samuel 8.

As we think about our lives and our nation, it is a great time to be alive. When I was younger and read through Scripture I thought, "It would have been great to be alive back then. It would have been great to see some of the miracles that are recorded in the Bible. It would have been great to be around Jesus during His earthly ministry." But this is a great time to be alive as well!

Let me give you some statistics comparing today with 50 years ago:

- The average human now earns nearly three times as much money (corrected for inflation), eats one-third more calories, buries two-thirds fewer children and can expect to live one-third longer.
- Poverty is taking a nose dive. We often hear that the rich get richer, but the poor are actually doing really well. Between 1980 and 2000, the poor doubled their consumption.

- The Chinese are ten times richer and live about 25 years longer than they did 50 years ago.
- Nigerians are twice as rich and live nine years longer.
- The percentage of the world's population living in absolute poverty has dropped by over half.
- The United Nations estimates that poverty was reduced more in the past 50 years than in the previous 500. We live in days of prosperity.

One reason that we are richer, healthier, taller, cleverer and living longer than ever before is that the four most basic human needs—food, clothing, fuel and shelter—have grown markedly cheaper. Here's an example: In 1800 a candle providing one hour of light cost the equivalent of six hours work. In 1880 the same light from a kerosene lamp took 15 minutes' work. In 1950 it was 8 seconds. Today it is half a second. In these terms we are 43,000 times better off than in 1800.

The environment is doing well. Despite what you hear, in the United States rivers, lakes, seas and air are getting cleaner all the time. A car today emits less pollution at full speed than a parked car did in 1970. It's a great time to be alive!

But we live in a shattered nation. With the passage of each decade America sinks deeper and deeper into sin and further away from God.

- In America today there are 60 million people who abuse alcohol.
- There are 22 million people who use illegal drugs.
- Almost twelve percent of all Americans admit that they have driven home under the influence of alcohol or drugs at least once in the last year.
- According to a study conducted by Mayo Clinic, nearly seventy percent of all Americans are on at least one prescription drug and twenty percent of Americans are on at least five prescription drugs. Many of these drugs are for things like anxiety or depression.
- Twenty percent of all U.S. adults have no religious affiliation whatsoever. In 1972 only seven percent claimed no religious affiliation.
- Planned Parenthood performs more than 300,000 abortions every single year. One very shocking study says that eighty-six percent of those abortions were committed for the sake of "convenience."

Now let's look at the nation of Israel and learn from them. Turn to 1 Corinthians 10. Here we see why these true stories from 1 Samuel are in Scripture:

For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea,² and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea,³ and all ate the same spiritual food,⁴ and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ.⁵ Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.⁶ Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did.

¹¹Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.

So these stories about ancient Israel are in the Scriptures for our instruction. They are examples to us. Many times they're negative examples. First Samuel seems like a negative book. A lot of bad things happened. Now let's look at 1 Samuel 8:

When Samuel became old, he made his sons judges over Israel.² The name of his firstborn son was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beersheba.³ Yet his sons did not walk in his ways but turned aside after gain. They took bribes and perverted justice.

That sounds familiar, doesn't it? Eli had sons who were doing that as well.

⁴Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah⁵ and said to him, "Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations."⁶ But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." And Samuel prayed to the LORD.⁷ And the LORD said to Samuel, "Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them."⁸ According to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you.

⁹Now then, obey their voice; only you shall solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them..."

¹⁰So Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking for a king from him. ¹¹He said, "These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen and to run before his chariots. ¹²And he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. ¹³He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. ¹⁴He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his servants. ¹⁵He will take the tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants. ¹⁶He will take your male servants and female servants and the best of your young men and your donkeys, and put them to his work. ¹⁷He will take the tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. ¹⁸And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will not answer you in that day."

The people demanded a king. They demanded to leave the theocracy they were under where God was their King in order to become a monarchy with kings and queens. They wanted to leave a theocracy for a monarchy with a king in command. That came with consequences. How did the people respond?

⁹But the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel. And they said, "No! But there shall be a king over us," ²⁰that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles." ²¹And when Samuel had heard all the words of the people, he repeated them in the ears of the LORD. ²²And the LORD said to Samuel, "Obey their voice and make them a king." Samuel then said to the men of Israel, "Go every man to his city."

Israel was moving into a time of brokenness. It would lead to the appointment of the first king named Saul. Saul was a cowardly, weak-willed man who got the people in trouble. He was a bad guy. Next was King David who was a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14), but he also had issues. He was a man of war and blood. Under King David the nation of Israel was in constant battle. Next was King Solomon who was very wise but by the end of his reign, because of all of his wives and bad influences around him, there was idol worship throughout Israel. The Baals and the Ashtaroths were being worshipped in the high places around the nation of Israel and it just went downhill after that.

1. People who Forget How God has Led Them in the Past

First Samuel 8:1 says, *"When Samuel became old..."* Many years had passed between chapter seven and chapter eight. In 1 Samuel 7:12 they had a renewal of sorts. *"Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen and called its name Ebenezer; for he said, 'Till now the LORD has helped us.'"* There seemed to be a revival going on.

God's patience

Earlier in that time there was sin in the nation of Israel. First Samuel 7:3 says, *"If you are returning to the Lord with all your heart..."* In chapter seven the people returned to the Lord. We must never forget God's patience. The nation of Israel forgot the patience of God. He said:

"If you are returning to the LORD with all your heart, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtaroath from among you and direct your heart to the LORD and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines." ⁴So the people of Israel put away the Baals and the Ashtaroath, and they served the LORD only.

"If you are returning to the Lord..." God was so patient with His people. They had fallen into idol worship again. They were worshipping Baal, who was the chief male deity of the ancient Near East. They were also worshipping Ashtaroath who was the chief female deity of fertility. They set these idols up in the high places where idol worship occurred. For Ashtaroath they erected poles and the people would come to worship this goddess of fertility. They would engage in sexual activity with prostitutes of Ashtaroath around these poles. This was idolatry and sin at the very core. God said, *"If you are returning..."* God was there patiently calling His people back to Himself.

You can find many places around the Chicagoland area where women are dancing around poles. The whole thing is tied together. It's sin and idolatry. Sex is a god.

God was patient and these people had forgotten that just a few years before God had invited them to return back, and they did! They put away their Baals and Ashtaroths and returned to God.

God's partnership

Look at 1 Samuel 7:12. Samuel set up the stone he called Ebenezer and said, *"Till now the Lord has helped us."* God was Israel's partner. He helped the nation of Israel. There was a partnership and union. The church is God's people today. There's a partnership we have with God Almighty that He will be there for us, help us and protect us.

God's protection

First Samuel 7:13 says, *"So the Philistines were subdued and did not again enter the territory of Israel. And the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel."* God invited the Israelites back. He was patient with them. When they came back He partnered with them and protected them. He gave them victory over the Philistines and the other nations who sought to wipe out Israel.

God's provision

God provided greatly for the nation of Israel but the people had forgotten God's provision. Verse fourteen says, *"The cities that the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron to Gath, and Israel delivered their territory from the hand of the Philistines. There was peace also between Israel and the Amorites."* Do you see what God had done? God had done so much for Israel. But then some years later they went to Samuel and said, "We want a king. Forget God!" God said to Samuel, *"They have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them."* "Forget God! We want a man who is going to lead us and fight our battles." "Israel, don't you remember that God partnered with you, protected you and provided for you?"

God has done so much good for us. In our country today, we enjoy a quality of life unmatched by most people who have ever lived on this planet. Yet we seem to have forgotten God. Oliver Wolcott was one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. He was a military general and governor of Connecticut who wrote this:

Through various scenes of life, God has sustained me. May He ever be my unfailing friend; may His love cherish my soul; may my heart with gratitude acknowledge His goodness; and may my desires be to Him and to the remembrance of His name... May we then turn our eyes to the bright objects above, and may God give us strength to travel the upward road.

This leader of our nation was preaching truth.

Shattered nations are created by people who forget what God has done and how God has led them in the past. Have you forgotten what God has done for you? Have you forgotten that God has saved you and that He loved you even when you were a sinner? *"But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:8). Jesus didn't wait for you to clean yourself up. No, when you were lost in your sin and at the worst possible place, He loved you so much that He died for you so that you could turn to Him in repentance and faith and be forgiven and have a right relationship with God. This is the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Don't forget it! Don't forget what He has done for you.

2. People who Reject God's Plan for the Present

Shattered nations are created by people who forget what God has done, but they're sustained by people who reject God's plan for the present. Israel seemed to have logical reasons for wanting a king. In 1 Samuel 8:4-5 they said, "You're old, Samuel. You're not going to be around much longer. Your sons are rotten. Give us a king!" That's not bad reasoning. We can understand that request. But in that request was a rejection of God.

In verses 10-18 Samuel warned them about what it would be like to have a king. "The king will tax you so he can live his opulent lifestyle. He will take your sons and daughters and put them to work. It's going to be a hard life under a king." Yet they did not listen to Samuel. In fact verse 19 says they refused to listen to the voice of Samuel. Why? Because they wanted to be like all of the other nations. "Give us a king! We want to be like the other nations."

We pervert justice instead of pursuing God

Just like the nation of Israel, we reject God's plan when we pervert justice instead of pursuing God. This goes on in our nation. I want to be careful because this isn't a message of "Restore America to her former glory." But this is a truth that we must embrace: we are far from God. When we reject God and His plans for us, we tend to pervert justice instead of pursuing God.

There is forgiveness for every sin. The Lord Jesus died on the cross for all sins. If you have had an abortion there is forgiveness and restoration at the cross of Christ. But we must talk about the injustice that is happening to the weakest among us. Today we can see videos of baby parts being harvested and sold, yet nobody really seems to care. "What's the big deal?"

Even if you don't believe that life begins at conception, we can look at what are widely considered the first signs of life for a baby outside the womb and compare them to signs of life inside the womb. Let's take the measurements that we use in hospitals

today. If we measure brain activity we see it begins at about eight weeks for a baby in the womb. The heartbeat starts at about ten weeks. I remember hearing my children's hearts beat for the first time. Abortion is easier to deal with when it's just a medical thing. We pervert justice instead of pursuing God.

We are conformed to the world and not transformed by the Word

This is for each one of us. This is for us in the church. Christian, this is for you. Romans 12:2 says, *"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind."* Instead we let all of the stuff around us mold us into the world's image. We're so influenced by outside sources that we forget what it means to live for God, pursue Him in His Word and grow into the likeness of Jesus Christ Himself. We forget to be humble, to serve, to give of ourselves and do what's right. We forget to hold onto what's good, to maintain justice and speak for the ones who can't speak. People rejecting God leads to a shattered nation.

We discourage the godly and encourage the godless

I dare you to watch MTV for a while. (You don't have to really.) Watch any TV for a little bit and you'll see this played out. We discourage the godly and encourage the godless. Godless is what's good; godly stuff is laughable. Marriage isn't about God's way; it's about our way and what we believe and want. Purity is laughed at while promiscuity is applauded. The ways of the world are pictured as freeing while the things of God are seen as constraining. Even among Christians, if you have a real worldly testimony where you came from drugs and promiscuity and the deep mires of sin then people think you have an awesome testimony. In Romans 16:19 Paul says we should be innocent to sin. Innocence is laughed at. The world says you should experience all you can while you can. Taste and see what the world can give.

Hell is a party; heaven will be boring. "Hell is where my friends are going to be. I don't want to go to heaven and sit in a 24-hour church service." There is a misunderstanding of the glories of God that are prepared for those who love Him. God is ridiculed while government is seen as the real savior. God is a joke and government is real. "Government will provide for me."

3. People who Get What They Ask For in the Future

This is an interesting part of our story today. Remember this Old Testament story is given as an example for us—you, me, this church, our nation. The interesting thing is that in verse nine God says to Samuel, *"Now then, obey their voice."* Then verse 18 says, *"In that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will not answer you in that day."* God says, "Give it to them," and now they have chosen a king. In verse 22 God says to Samuel, *"Obey their voice and make them a king."*

So God gave the people what they asked for even though they asked for the wrong thing. They were asking with the wrong heart. They were asking with the wrong understanding. They were asking with a short memory. They were asking God to get out of the way and give them their man.

There are three principles I want you to see.

God has warned us, yet we still wander away

Many times in my life I see what people are going through, the choices they make and the sin that leads to certain consequences and I think to myself, "I should make note of that. I want to steer clear of that sin. God's warning me here." But then I find myself in that very moment forgetting that warning and wandering away.

God, help us to listen when You warn us! God, help us as a church to answer when You call us! God, help us as a nation to open our ears and listen when You speak!

God has warned us but we still wander away.

God gives us at times what we want, even when we are guilty

This can lead to absolute loss. We see this in Romans 1 where Paul is writing about people who reject God and worship creation rather than the Creator:

²¹For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²²Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

²⁴Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

²⁶For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; ²⁷and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

²⁸And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done

These are some of the saddest words in Scripture: *"God gave them up..."* God, don't give me up! God is a God of patience. He calls you to come to Him. But there is a day when God gives people up.

God uses the consequences of rebellion to redirect us back to Himself

Once when my family was at a hotel, I was ironing one of my dress shirts and my oldest son wanted to touch the iron. He was pulling the cord and was going to burn himself. Finally I gave him up. "Go ahead!" And he burned himself. He repented and he doesn't touch hot irons anymore.

Here's the good news: God did give them up, but sometimes when God gives us up, He restores us from our rebellion. When we humbly come back to the Lord, God is good and gracious. Not only does He receive us back to Himself, but God runs to us to lift us up. Remember the prodigal son coming home (Luke 15:11–32)? He can't even bring himself to say the words he had prepared to say to his father. Jesus gives us this story to show us a picture of our heavenly Father. He sees the son from a ways off and runs to him and embraces him. He doesn't even let him use the speech he had prepared. He says, "You're my son! Welcome home."

The nation of Israel experienced the same thing in 1 Samuel 12. It was just a few short years after they rejected God and demanded a king, moving from a theocracy to a monarchy, that Samuel gave his farewell address and said, "Have I treated you wrongly? Before the Lord I stand." They all said, "No, you haven't treated us wrongly. You were a great prophet of God. You've served us well." And verse 19 says, *"And all the people said to Samuel, 'Pray for your servants to the LORD your God, that we may not die, for we have added to all our sins this evil, to ask for ourselves a king.'"*

From chapter nine to chapter twelve they came to the realization that what they asked for was sin and rebellion.

²⁰And Samuel said to the people, "Do not be afraid; you have done all this evil. Yet do not turn aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart. ²¹And do not turn aside after empty things that cannot profit or deliver, for they are empty. ²²For the LORD will not forsake his people, for his great name's sake, because it has pleased the LORD to make you a people for himself. ²³Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you, and I will instruct you in the good and the right way. ²⁴Only fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you. ²⁵But if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king."

So this is the take away for us individually, as a church, as a nation: fear the Lord and serve Him faithfully with all your heart. Serve the Lord, live for Him. Jesus died for you so you can live for Him. You can make much of Jesus' Name in the way you live and the way you love your neighbor, in the way that you stand for truth and maintain justice. Live for the Lord. If not, if you "do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king" — a shattered nation.