

Los Angeles Conference #4

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon emphasizes the importance of maintaining a right position with God and not choosing an alternative to God's best, as seen in the story of Israel's request for a king.

Duration: 46:08

Scripture: 1 Samuel 8:4, Hosea 13:10, Matthew 6:33, Acts 13:21

Topics: "Conference"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the story of the Israelites in the book of Samuel. The Israelites, dissatisfied with Samuel's leadership and the behavior of his sons, demanded a king to judge them like other nations. This request displeased Samuel, as it was a rejection of God's authority over them. The speaker emphasizes the importance of maintaining a testimony that demonstrates the absolute supremacy of the Lord, without relying on worldly help or turning to other sources for support. The sermon highlights the need to examine the causes of losing the Lord's presence and the principles that govern our relationship with Him.

Transcript

When I left New York to come here, I had a very strong sense that at some time while I was here, the Lord would have me speak on a certain matter. So far, up till now, He has not underlined that, but in waiting upon Him, it seems that He has brought it up again. And so, I just commit myself to Him for what it is that He wants us to understand at this time.

May we have just a word of prayer? Lord, Thou art the Master, we are the servants, and it is for us to receive our orders from Thee, and to obey them, and not to do our own will or speak our own words. And so, we would have it now, we may only give at this time what Thou dost give to us, so that it may be receiving from the Lord, and not from man. By the Holy Spirit, make it like that, we pray, in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Amen. In the first book of Samuel, the first book of Samuel, chapter 8, at verse 4, Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Rama, and they said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways. Now, make us a king to judge us, like all the nations.

But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. Samuel prayed unto the Lord. The Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee, for

they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not be king over them.

According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them out of Egypt, even unto this day, in that they have forsaken me, and served other gods, and so do they also unto thee. Now therefore, hearken unto their voice, howbeit thou shalt protest solemnly unto them, and shalt show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them. Verse 19, But the people refused to hearken unto the voice of Samuel, and they said, Nay, but we will have a king over us.

But we also may be like all the nations, that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battle. Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king.

Samuel said unto all the men of Israel, Go ye, every man, unto his city. In the prophecies of Hosea, chapter 13, verse 10, Where now is thy king, that he may save thee in all thy cities? And thy judges, of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes, I have given thee a king in mine anger, and have taken him away in my aura. In the book of the Acts, chapter 13, verse 21, Afterward they asked for a king, and God gave unto them Saul, the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for the space of forty years.

And when he had removed him, he raised up David. This episode in the history of Israel, the episode of Saul, the king, while it has some elements which may perplex and be difficult to understand, contains some very instructive things for the people of God at all times. For it is not just a bit of Old Testament history, what is here in principle has arisen again and again in the history of the people of God, and become, as in this case, the point upon which that history turned very often to tragedy.

What lies here at the heart of this incident or episode is man's alternative to God's best. And in stating that, you will immediately recognize that that is an issue which is constantly arising. It arises in our lives as it has arisen in the history of the Church all through these centuries.

The issue of man's alternative to God's best. And the thing which is all governing in this matter is that of the continued presence of the Lord in life and power right on to the end. You notice that that is the matter which Hosea brings out so forcefully.

You ask for a king and you got what you insisted upon having. Where is he today? What's the good of him today in so insisting you lost the Lord? You chose an alternative to the immediate presence and government of the Lord. And your alternative has let you down.

Where are you today without both your alternative and the Lord? So we repeat the all governing question is that of the continued presence of the Lord in power with his people. Not for a time, but right on to the end. The Lord has been able to abide, to remain, to stay and go right on to the end.

There has not come a time in which it could be said the Lord is no longer amongst us. That's a big issue, isn't it? A very big one indeed. And I have said that this episode is not just a bit of Old Testament history.

It is set in a very large context in Christian history. And it must be therefore carefully examined and analyzed to discover the causes. On the one side of the disaster, the tragedy of losing the Lord.

And on the other side, the ground on which the Lord is going to abide with his people to the end. We must therefore look into this to lift out the principles governing this whole question. The Lord's verdict is written clear.

They have not rejected you, he said to Samuel. They have rejected me. That's what the Lord thought about it.

They would not have accepted that. To be put to them quite boldly in that way. You are this day casting out the Lord, repudiating the Lord.

They would have been very angry indeed. But nevertheless, the Lord said that was what they were doing, whether they would accept it or not. It can be done, you see.

While we even protest that that is not what we mean or intend, we can just be doing it. Now right at the heart of this story, one fragment of two words only is the clue to the whole great mistake. The whole phrase is, make us a king like unto the nations.

And the fragment is, like unto. Like unto. Whenever the people of God fall out of the immediate and direct government of the Holy Spirit, invariably they proceed to imitate, reproduce something that they have seen.

Objectively. Not by revelation. Not spiritually.

But something that they have seen. And we'll have it like that. We'll make it like that.

We'll reproduce that. We will duplicate that. Very often it comes down to this.

We'll have a New Testament order. Something studied. Something objectively apprehended.

But it's an imitation. It's a seeking to reproduce something that already exists in some form, some settled established form and order. And let it be said at once, dear friends, that as in this case in Samuel, which is a continuation for a time of the book of Judges.

So in every other case when this happens, it's always the mark of spiritual decline when you do that. It is not a mark of spiritual maturity to do that. A spiritual progress.

It's a time of spiritual declension when you've got to imitate something. There is a very big principle involved in this. Imitation.

Duplication. Reproduction. By making.

Make us. By making. All this is the incorrigible habit of the natural man.

The incorrigible habit of natural man. To make something. Like something.

That was the terrible tendency and the tragic tendency of the Church of Corinth. To make the Church according to the wisdom of this world, on the principles of this world. And Paul said, you'll come.

Are you not come? Wisdom. The wisdom of this world. No.

Not that. But to form the Church on the principles of this world as they had seen the world, bringing it into the Church. It was a disastrous thing for Corinth.

It was the great peril which was threatening the churches in Galatia. Which drew the Apostle Paul out in such vehement anger. As you find nowhere else in all his writings.

Repeated, he uses the word, anathema. Anathema. And what was the tendency? Oh, this whole Judaistic set up which the Judaizers had brought down to impose as a fixed, settled, historical, traditional system upon something spiritual.

Creating this terrible crisis that the believers in Galatia were being influenced to the point of turning away from that which had come in by the Spirit, as Paul says, having begun in the Spirit. Turning away from that direct government of the Spirit to something and imitate it. The whole system of Judaism.

And so we could follow this thing through history. But it's coming up again and again. And here it is in this story as a great example of the tragedy of that.

Let us look at the real implications of this story. What was it that they were doing? What was it that was happening? And in noting these things, we have our lesson. We have our warning.

And we have our instruction. Note, it was a break with their right position. The position which was their right position before God.

What was their right position? The right position of the people of God. It was absolute separation from the nations. It began with Abraham, did they not? Look at God's dealings with Abraham.

Lifted him clean out. Separated him. Kept him separated.

Let him know that if he interfered with that separation as he did on one or two occasions, it came back, it reacted upon him in such a state of lost fellowship with God that he had to get his altar up again and recover. But on the whole, his is a life that is completely separated from the nations, from the world. And his seed, Israel, are an elect nation taken out of the nations.

Their 40 years in the wilderness had primarily this object to show them how utterly, utterly, they were an unworldly people. Or on the other side, so utterly a heavenly people. To have everything from heaven.

Their government, their provision and sustenance, their guidance, their strength, their continuance, right out from heaven because a wilderness can't provide you with very much. But the life here, of nature, separated unto God. We'll see why in a moment.

But this was their right position all through their history. It was just a battle over this. The maintaining of this position.

They were called a holy people. Sanctified. What is holiness? What is sanctification? It appears well if you get this thing settled.

Lots of ideas about holiness and sanctification. Do remember, dear friends, that this whole world, this whole world lies in the wicked one. That's the word of God.

It lies under a curse. And if it were the occasion, and I had the time, and I'm being beaten right up now over this matter before I've started. I could show you.

You would see very clearly how we are living in the part of the dispensation which is showing beyond any doubt or question that this creation lies under a curse. That everything that man thinks to be progress and development brings him into more trouble. And, and, all his efforts after power, after strength, only bring in more fear.

And fear is becoming the universal thing in this whole realm. Fear, fear, fear. The greatest achievement of man is the splitting of the atom or the making of the atomic bomb.

And what has it done? Brought more fear into the very creators of it than ever was in this world and into the whole world. Is there a curse on all men's works? Well, that's only a hint. It's only a hint, but it's like that.

Every fresh discovery and invention creates some new problem. Some new problem. And we go from problem to problem.

And they get bigger and bigger until men today are just completely bewildered as to how to contend with the forces of this universe. Well, I didn't intend to say that, only to emphasize that there's no doubt about it. What the Bible taught at the beginning and all the way through is that this world lies under a curse.

And its ruler is the accursed ruler. Touch it. Touch it spiritually.

Become linked with it in any spiritual way. And you touch death. Because you touch something evil.

Something unholy. Even unspiritual and unconverted men deserve something like this. The great Churchill, you know.

Not a saved man. A man who had a life with God. But very soon in his perception and judgment spoke of Hitler.

That evil man. That evil man. It's getting to the heart of it.

There's evil in this whole world system. And God takes his people right out of that. For all spiritual associations and connections you've got to live in it.

But not to be of it. Not to be in any way spiritually related to it. Holiness, sanctification, the same thing.

Everything is just separation unto God from that evil regime that governs this world. Ah, wrestling, says Paul, is with the world rulers of this darkness. Hosts of wicked spirits.

For they had been brought out and their right position with God was that. And when they maintained that position heaven was on their side. Heaven was on their side.

Whatever they were in themselves. But here, like unto the nation. What a drop.

What a collapse. What a break. With their right position.

I can't take more time with that. But the Bible speaks of that kind of thing as spiritual fornication. Spiritual fornication.

Intercourse with an evil state of things which is in this world. Touch it. You lose God.

He stands back. We'll leave that for a moment. Do you notice that the battle has always been on that with the people of God? Always on that issue.

If only the forces of evil can in some way bring about some kind of link between the people of God and themselves and their system. That's the doom of the people of God. This talk about worldliness, worldly

Christians and worldly church and worldliness in the church goes far deeper than just how you dress.

How you get yourself up and what you do and where you go. It's far deeper than that. It's touching spiritual iniquity.

And it spells spiritual death. It was a break then with their right position. It was a breach of vocation.

A breach of vocation. Why were they chosen out from the nations? Why is the church chosen out from the nations? Let's bring it right in. Why have you and I been called out from the nations? For God looked to take out of the nations a people for his name.

And we belong to that people if we're in Christ. But why? Why? Just to be saved and go to heaven? Thank God for all that. But this people and we were chosen, separated in Christ for a purpose, for a vocation.

And the vocation of the church as was the vocation of Israel and your vocation and mine, dear friends, is a very great one. It's an ultimate one. There's nothing beyond it.

It is threefold. We should be here amongst the nations, those separated from them, for a testimony to the absolute supremacy of the Lord. The absolute supremacy of the Lord.

Now you've only got to recall your own testimony. See, that's the issue. I am the Lord.

Beside me there is no other. Their whole existence rested upon that. They should fulfill this vocation of being here to let it be known to power seen and unseen, men and demons, earth and hell, that the Lord is the Lord Supreme.

And that's a very practical thing. It comes down to a lot of matters, you know. I've referred to their 40 years in the wilderness.

Well, here we are. Where are you going to have bread in a wilderness? Where are you going to have water in a wilderness? How are you going to live in a desert for 40 years? Only if heaven comes to your rescue. Only if God Almighty intervenes on your behalf.

It's a great illustration of this. But go through your whole Old Testament. This is the thing.

These people are either doing this or they're failing to do this. Maintaining a testimony in their very life and being, history and experience to the absolute supremacy of the Lord. Without any classes.

Without the Lord needing any help from the world. Without your having to turn in any other direction to see you through. For your support, for your maintenance, for your progress.

The Lord alone and the Lord sufficient. That's why they were chosen. It was a breach with their vocation when they said, like unto the nation.

Not only the supremacy of the Lord, but to keep before the world the nature of the Lord. The nature of the Lord. What kind of a Lord is this? What kind of God is God? The Lord, the Lord merciful and gracious.

Plenteous in loving kindness. Slow to anger. That was their song.

Intestine. A holy God. A holy God.

Without enlarging upon that, their vocation was to keep alive on this earth amongst the nations a testimony to what kind of a Lord the Lord is. Speaking of that, we leave it. And then their vocation was to demonstrate to all around the complete sufficiency of the Lord.

The Lord did not choose you because you were greater than any other people. Because you were more able and efficient. You were better.

Better, not a bit. We know today that that people is no better than the other people of the world. Indeed, Moses did say, if you depart from the Lord you'll stink in the nostrils of all people.

How true that has become. Not because they were better. No, they needed the grace of God perhaps more than any of the other nations.

They needed, because of their weakness, the power of God more than the nations round about. All they just needed the Lord. That's all there was to it.

And the Lord chose them. Chosen. Paul said to the Corinthians, you see your calling brethren.

Not many wise. Not many mighty. Not many noble.

God hath chosen the foolish and the weak and the things which are not. That's very comforting to us. But mark you, that can be just negative comfort.

What for? To bring to naught the wise, the mighty, the things that are. That no flesh should glory before God. That he that glorieth should glory in the Lord.

Absolute sufficiency of the Lord. That was their vocation. That's your vocation.

That's my vocation. And that has got to be preserved intact. In weakness.

Oh yes, weakness. If the Holy Spirit does one thing with those whom he gets really hold of, he brings them to weakness. He just under caps all their self-sufficiency.

Their self-importance. Their self-resourcefulness. You meet a truly Holy Spirit possessed man or woman.

And you meet one who has no strength in themselves. No confidence in themselves. Foolish.

Foolish. Why you're destined under the hand of the Holy Spirit to come to the place of utter bewilderment over everything. No confidence in themselves.

Foolish. Foolish. Why you're destined under the hand of the Holy Spirit to come to the place of utter bewilderment over everything.

If God doesn't resolve your problems and see you through, you're beaten absolutely. A want of explanation and understanding. It's all right.

It's just the way of the Lord. Emptiness. Emptiness.

Yes, that's the way of the Spirit. Way of the Spirit. You know the way of a river? The way of a river is always the lowest channel.

Always seeks out the lowest place, a river does. Spirit, which is the river of God, always seeks out the lowest place. Emptiness.

And this is the way of the divine glory. But this was a break. A break with vocation.

Make us a king like unto the nation. And I must hurry to close. It was a repudiation of the principle of their very existence.

What was it? You see, dear friends, there are depths of divine wisdom which we have not fathomed or grasped. By his people and in his people, God is undercutting the whole of the work that the devil did in mankind at the beginning. And the principle of the man of God, the woman of God, the people of God, is utter and absolute dependence upon the Lord.

Dependence upon the Lord. Look at Moses. Look at Abraham.

Look at all of them. Moses, a man learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. Evidently a very wise, intellectual, well-trained and tremendously efficient man when he was in Egypt.

Comes out and after forty years under the hand of God, and God calls him to go. He said, I cannot speak. I cannot speak.

I cannot. Oh, if you will send, send by anyone whom you will, but not by me. I'm not your man.

He's only one example, isn't he? Jeremiah, I cannot speak. I am but a child. I'm but a child.

Here is utter dependence upon God. Saul of Tarsus, the big man in his own realm. Yes.

Everything. Everything. But if there is one man in history who knew his dependence upon the Lord, it was Paul the Apostle.

Utter dependence upon the Lord. We had the sentence of death. That we might not trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead.

That's where I am. Dead man needing to be raised. Dead man can't do very much, can he? Not much good.

Dead man needing to be raised. The principle of absolute dependence upon the Lord, which was the principle of Christ's own life. The son can do nothing out from himself, but whatsoever he seeeth the Father doing.

The words that I speak, I speak not of myself. The works that I do, I do not of myself. Dependent.

Dependent. Yes. Make us a king like unto the nations.

Repudiation of this very principle. A change from the spiritual to the natural. Saul.

Saul, their choice. Saul, the man whom God gave them, was everything that pleased the natural. Look at him, he's taller than any other man in history.

He's finer looking. He's a finer specimen of humanity than any other there. He's magnificent fellow, judged naturally.

Yes, all right. You ask for it, you've got it. What you ask for.

The natural? God will give you the natural. But we close. What did the Lord do about it? What did the Lord do? Well, he did two things.

He helped them to their own conclusions. This is a very terrible thought. He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their souls.

No, dear friends, apparent prosperity and blessing is not always a good sign. You think that we're having great blessing. Things are going just as we want them to go.

At least that's why there may be a snare in it. Depends on the motive. Lying behind it all.

Your natural gratification and pleasure. Something to glory in. Your wonderful soul, whatever he may be.

Your system. Your organization. Your thing.

Wonderful soul. Bigger than any other. Something to take note of and to point out.

Look, look. A terrible snare in that. The Lord may not be in it.

The Lord helped them to their own conclusions. He gave them a king. Told Samuel, anoint him.

Go on. Go right along their line. They are determined.

Give them what they're determined to have. It will help them to their own conclusions. And so he did.

And you know what the conclusion was. By divine aid, they came to tragedy. But the Lord was doing another thing.

And this is better. While all this was going on, he was secretly preparing something that was after his own heart. Unrecognized for the time being.

Taken no note of, no account of for the time being. All these people getting on with their soul. The Lord is working outside.

That little David. Secretly chosen and anointed. Separated unto God.

Going through a deep history with God. Deep history. For a long time during the whole of these 40 years of Saul's reign.

What a terrible time David was having. There out there in his cave of Adullam. But God is doing something in him.

Secretly doing a deep work in David. Preparing him for the day of the crisis. And there is seeking out to him those who are being disillusioned.

Saying, this is not it. This is not it. We've made a mistake.

We've got on the wrong line. This is not meeting our real need. This is all disappointing.

And a few like that growing company. With their disillusionment and their hard emptiness. Disappointment with this whole thing.

Moving out to David. And God was forming something secretly and hiddenly. That was really out of his own heart.

Oh there's a lot of history in that. I don't like being critical at all. But I do point this out dear friends.

There's a great deal of the soul idea about in Christianity. The big thing. The wonderful thing.

The natural fleshly thing that appeals to men and the world. Something like unto the nations. Like that.

There's a lot of it. But is it not true that even in such a day there are many hungry empty hearts. That are not finding that to be the answer.

They're on stretch for something more. And God is doing a secret work in our day. Make no mistake about it.

Go over this world. Here, there and there. One, two, few.

Whose hearts are disappointed. And whose hearts are reaching out for the true thing of God. And God is doing it secretly.

Going to do no soul kind of thing over this. No great public bigness. But no quietly and secretly is doing his deep work.

And these will be the instrument. When that day arrives when this whole other thing will be blown to bits. It will be the people who know the Lord.

With whom the Lord will go through to the end. I've had to stamp a lot and leave out quite a lot this morning. Gone far beyond allotted time.

But I got a comforting note to take all the time I needed. I haven't done that. But dear friends, I trust you see the point.

This is the issue. Whether you're with the thing like unto the nation. Or whether you are with the thing that is after the heart of God.

I have chosen me a man after mine own heart. Who shall do all my pleasure. My pleasure.

The Lord give us understanding. Do give us this insight, perception, understanding, discernment. In the things that differ.

Even in Christian things. But things that differ. And lead us in the way where thou thyself canst commit thyself without reserve.

Where thou canst abide forever. For thy name's sake.

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