

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

SEPTEMBER 3RD, 2023 // 1 SAMUEL

PRESUMING (1 SAMUEL 4:1-11) GOD SPEAKS THROUGH SAMUEL

As biblical history begins to transition from the judges to the kings, God begins a unique relationship with Samuel where He will speak directly to him, and then Samuel will speak to Israel.

- God was always speaking to Israel, **but the people weren't listening because of their prideful, sinful desires.**

PRIDE GOES BEFORE THE FALL

God chose Samuel to be a prophet and leader to His people, but the people chose their own path. Instead of seeking God's plans for the Philistines, Israel decides on its own to go to battle against their enemies. The battle does not go well for them.

- **How many times do we make decisions and assume God will bless?**

GOD'S PRESENCE

The Israelites rightly determine God wasn't with them in the battle but wrongly assume it was because they didn't have the ark. They seemed to think the power to deliver was in the ark as a religious lucky charm rather than in God Himself.

- God didn't "go" with Israel because the ark wasn't there, **but because of their sin.**

PRESUMING ON GOD

The Israelites seem to presume that if they control the ark, they control the Lord. Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, once again show their sinful dismissal of God by not consulting Him. Maybe they pridefully felt God was in their control since they were priests.

- **The height of arrogance believes God is under our control.**

JOY IN THE GIFT, NOT THE GIVER

When the troops saw the ark, they greatly rejoiced. But their joy wasn't in the Lord; it was in the ark itself. The idolatrous Philistines put their focus on the ark's presence. Israel should have known better. The ark was a gift from God, not God Himself.

- **We must be careful not to elevate God's gifts over God.**

GOD BECAME GODS?

The Philistines say that the ark has brought Israel's "gods" into the camp—the "gods" who defeated Egypt. Why gods? Israel's behavior since leaving Egypt was one of pursuing other gods besides God. The Philistines saw Israel as polytheistic because of their practices.

- **As Christians, do we let culture conform us to its image?**

GOD DOES AS HE PLEASURES

Israel learns once again that God is in heaven and does as He pleases (Psalm 115:3). He cannot be controlled. Israel's defeat is devastating. Not only do 30,000 men die, but Eli's sons are killed. And the greatest defeat of all—the ark is captured.

- **There are consequences to acting on our own wisdom and presumptions.**

ABSENCE (1 SAMUEL 4:12-22) CONSEQUENCES WILL FOLLOW

Israel is soundly defeated, with 34,000 men, including Hophni and Phinehas, killed in battle. God demonstrates that He alone is God and cannot be manipulated or controlled. Yes, Israel can think the opposite. But the consequences of those thoughts and actions will be devastating.

- **Thoughts and actions make a difference.**

GREATER SORROW THAN DEATH

The news of Israel's defeat reaches Shiloh, and the people mourn greatly. Eli asks about the outcry and learns that his sons have been killed. However, the sorrow that killed Eli was the capture of the ark.

- Eli lost his sons years before due to their sinful lives he permitted. The "loss" of God's presence was God's judgment.

FAMILY INFLUENCES

Phinehas' pregnant wife lost her husband, brother-in-law, and father-in-law all on the same day. The sorrow put her into premature labor. While the birth of a son in those times was the ultimate gift of God to be celebrated, it became another example of God's departed glory.

- **Families who ignore God can cause awful influences for generations.**

THE GLORY HAS DEPARTED

With her dying breath, Phinehas' wife names their son Ichabod, a sad nod to the horrible mess in which her son was born.

- God's glory is the display of His attributes and character so that He alone is worshipped and adored. In a sense, God's glory had departed Israel long before. **Is God's glory absent from us?**

ONE TRUE GOD (1 SAMUEL 5) GODS AT WAR

In biblical times, nations and city-states would go to war against one another. These wars weren't just about resources. They were wars of territorial gods against one another to determine the most powerful god. The Philistines believed their god, Dagon, had proven to be more powerful than Israel's God, Yahweh, and took the ark as a trophy.

WHO BOWS TO WHOM?

As an act of victory and worship, the Philistines place the ark in a subservient position next to their god, Dagon, believing he had granted them victory over Israel and its God. However, the next morning the people find their god on his face before the ark.

- **We claim to be God-followers but easily bow to gods other than Him.**

PUNY GODS

One of the great biblical claims against idols is that they are made by men, can't speak or eat, and can't move on their own. Dagon has to be lifted up and returned to his place by his people.

- **When will we see that the gods we chase after are full of empty promises that leave us broken, not fulfilled?**

CLEAR DEFEAT

The next morning, not only was Dagon fallen on his face before the ark, but his head and hands were broken off, a symbol of military victory against defeated kings. There would be no lifting Dagon up before the ark.

- **One of the great cries in the Old Testament is that the battle belongs to the Lord, and He needs no help.**

THE LORD'S HEAVY HAND

As He did in Egypt, the Lord brings judgment against the Philistines, which includes terrors and tumors. The trophy of victory has turned into an instrument of destruction. God's destruction goes with Him because He isn't limited to a territory but is God everywhere.

- **For Christians, God's heavy hand is loving discipline leading to repentance.**

LUCKY CHARM OR SOVEREIGN GOD

- **Do we live as if God owes us rather than us owing God?**
- Have we falsely made decisions without seeking God, expecting Him to bless us?
- How has our culture changed our view of God and how we should live for Him?
- **Why are we surprised that our decisions have real consequences?**

IT'S HIS GLORY

- God is God and is fully sovereign whether we live like it or not.
- We can be examples and influencers, to the glory of God, that affect generations.
- **We can go through the motions without the power.**
- **Let's not be like Samson who didn't know God's presence had left him (Judges 16:20).**

WHERE ARE OUR HEARTS?

- Have we followed after other gods in such a way that our lives are empty?
- Do we love the Lord with all our hearts, souls, minds, and strength?
- Do we trust that the battle belongs to the Lord so that we cast our cares on Him?
- **Do we welcome God's discipline because it yields repentance?**

AN INVENTORY

- Are we in God's Word daily so that we know how to live for Him?
- Are we praying, knowing that we depend on Him for everything?
- Are we serving to His glory because He commands it and has gifted us?
- **Do we live our lives with a "not my will but Your will be done" surrender?**