

## THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

SEPTEMBER 9TH-10TH, 2023 // 1 SAMUEL

### A TEST (1 SAMUEL 6:1-12)

#### PHILISTINES PLEADED

Philistines kept the ark of the Lord with them for seven months. They may have been reluctant to give up this "trophy" of what they felt was victory over the God of Israel.

- It can take a long time before we realize the futility of resisting God. **Will we humble ourselves or continue to resist God?**

#### GUILT OFFERING

The priests knew they should do something to express their sorrow before God. Fashioning an offering in the shape of the things (tumors and mice) from which a people wanted to be delivered is well attested in this time.

- **When we are desperate and do not run to God, we will run to other gods.**

#### "GIVE GLORY TO ISRAEL'S GOD"

Acknowledging God's judgment is one way to give glory to God. The Philistines admitted that God judged their gods, but similar to the Egyptians, **their hearts were hardened.**

- They confessed that He was God, but **their lifestyles communicated that other gods were more important.**

### A TEST TO DETERMINE IF GOD IS IN CHARGE...

The priests recommended a test. The test is the use of two cows to carry the ark back to Israel. Cows with young calves dependent on them and unaccustomed to pulling a cart would likely turn back and fail to deliver the ark to Israel.

#### SHOCKING RESULTS

This was a remarkable miracle! The cows who had never pulled a cart before headed straight for the road and didn't turn to the right or the left.

- The Israelites and Philistines both resisted God, so He used two cows for His glory. **God is in control, and His plans will continue, with or without us.**

### HOLINESS (1 SAMUEL 6:13-21)

#### OVERJOYED

The Israelites felt as though God had abandoned them. They were discouraged and hopeless. They felt they received God back and were "overjoyed to see it."

- **Depending on our feelings alone can leave us hopeless.** A life of daily obedience will lead to joy regardless of the circumstances.

#### PERSUADED

The five Philistine rulers recognized God's hand in their troubles of the past seven months. Their reaction isn't recorded, but they must have been persuaded as they returned to Ekron and shared what had happened.

- "For I am persuaded..." will alter how we live. (see Romans 8:38) **What are we persuaded by?**

#### GOD'S JUDGMENT

The men of Beth-Shemesh sinned by touching the ark and looking into it. God dealt with the Israelites more strictly than the Philistines because they had His law and should have known better.

- **We will be held accountable for the lives we live based on what we know.**

#### "WHO IS ABLE TO STAND IN HIS PRESENCE..."

Holiness is not achieved through our own efforts, but it is received as we are made new in Christ (Ephesians 4:24).

- Though God is holy and set apart, **He invites us to be in relationship with Him.** Jesus makes this possible for us, but part of that process involves repentance.

### REPENTANCE (1 SAMUEL 7)

#### THE ARK AT KIRIATH-JEARIM

Israel had the ark back, but things were not really set right. They found **they were not more right with God just because they had the ark again.** They "longed for the Lord."

- **Are we just religious people who are empty inside?** A relationship with God is drastically different than a religious lifestyle.

#### SAMUEL BEGINS PREACHING

Samuel called the nation to repentance. Repentance **is both a turning away from one's sins, which have caused the separation, and a turning to God, who can forgive and restore.**

- **Does our repentance involve both turning away and turning to?**

#### INWARD AND OUTWARD

The repentance had to be inward (with all their hearts) and outward (get rid of the gods). The inward was more important than the outward, and it had to come first.

- **People are sorry about the effects of sin but still want to hold on to the sin itself.** True repentance leads to action.

### TRUE REPENTANCE LEADS TO ACTION

Repentance leads to the following actions: "Get rid of foreign gods... set your hearts on the Lord, and worship only him" (1 Samuel 7:3).

- **What gods need to be put away and not picked up again? Do we set our hearts on God or other gods? Do we worship "only Him"?**

#### GATHERED AT MIZPAH

Samuel leads the people in a corporate act of worship. They expressed their repentance by putting away the bad and pursuing the good.

- **The assembling, the fasting, the confession, and the pouring of water make their repentance focused on God.**

#### LET'S TRY A NEW STRATEGY!

The Philistines heard of the assembly and decided to attack. **Instead of trying to manipulate God, the Israelites prayed.**

- God turned their shame of defeat (ch. 4) into victory (ch. 7). **If we are humble, the shame of our past can be restored into beauty for Him.**

#### "THE LORD HAS HELPED US TO THIS POINT"

Samuel **wanted Israel to remember the past and be thankful for God's help.** He named the stone Ebenezer, meaning "stone of help."

- We can be forgetful people. Remembering God's help in the past encourages hope for the future, and **hope sustains faith.**

### GOD IS SOVEREIGN

- God is in control, and we are not. Do we really trust that He is in control?
- Do we trust that His plans are better than ours and that **He is good?** If the answer is yes, then we can live with open hands.
- **God's plan will continue, with or without us. He graciously invites us to be with Him!**

### REPENTANCE

- The feeling of conviction of sin proves nothing. It is our response to conviction that demonstrates repentance. **What do we do when we experience conviction?**
- **Committing ourselves to the Lord exclusively (inward) means we have to get rid of other gods (outward).**
- Samuel's message needs to be a daily reminder for us: "Get rid of the foreign gods... set your hearts on the Lord, and worship only Him" (1 Samuel 7:3)
- We need to turn away from sin and turn to God. **Reading, praying, fasting, and being in community are important!**

### GOD'S REDEMPTION

- Living life, or "going into battle," without God (ch. 4) leads to shame and defeat.
- **Living life committed to an authentic relationship with God leads to joy, peace, patience, and self-control!**
- **Regardless of our past, God can redeem us if we surrender to Him.**

### EBENEZER

- Do we remember all that God has done? How can we begin to have "Ebenezers" in our lives?
- **Sitting still and thinking of all that God has done can be the most encouraging thing for us. God has done more than enough, and He is faithful even when we're not.**