

1 Samuel 7:3-17 (ESV)

3 And Samuel said to all the house of Israel, “If you are returning to the Lord with all your heart, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashteroth 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.” 4 So the people of Israel put away the Baals and the Ashteroth, and they served the Lord only.

5 Then Samuel said, “Gather all Israel at Mizpah, and I will pray to the Lord for you.” 6 So they gathered at Mizpah and drew water and poured it out before the Lord and fasted on that day and said there, “We have sinned against the Lord.” And Samuel judged the people of Israel at Mizpah.

7 Now when the Philistines heard that the people of Israel had gathered at Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the people of Israel heard of it, they were afraid of the Philistines. 8 And the people of Israel said to Samuel, “Do not cease to cry out to the Lord our God for us, that he may save us from the hand of the Philistines.” 9 So Samuel took a nursing lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the Lord. And Samuel cried out to the Lord for Israel, and the Lord answered him. 10 As Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to attack Israel. But the Lord thundered with a mighty sound that day against the Philistines and threw them into confusion, and they were defeated before Israel. 11 And the men of Israel went out from Mizpah and pursued the Philistines and struck them, as far as below Beth-car.

12 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.” 13 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. 14 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. 15 Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. 16 And he went on a circuit year by year to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah. And he judged Israel in all these places. 17 Then he would return to Ramah, for his home was there, and there also he judged Israel. And he built there an altar to the Lord.

A Passage About Worship

This is a passage about worship.

Particularly, this passage reminds us how important it is to live a life of continual worship.

It's not a coincidence that this passage is actually a pretty positive passage when compared to many of the passages we've looked at so far in the book of 1 Samuel.

- Israel defeated by the Philistines in Chapter 4
- The ark being captured by the Philistines
- Eli's sons, Hophni and Phineas were worthless wicked men who did not know the Lord
- Eli's daughter-in-law giving birth to a baby - Ichabod, meaning "The glory has departed from Israel."

Last week, we were reminded that God is jealous for his glory. God will be glorified.

- Even after the ark returns to Israel, Israel still fails to properly honor God
- 70 men look inside the ark and die

Things were not going the Israelites way, misfortune after misfortune

What was missing?

Worship was missing. There was no fear of the Lord. They just did whatever they wanted to do, whatever was right in their own eyes. And when we neglect God and just do whatever we want to do, things usually don't end up going well.

The Importance of a Life of Worship

Worship is our highest calling

John Piper QUOTE

Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever.

We were created to worship God, to live for God's glory

Because we were created to worship, if we're not living for God's glory, then we're living for someone else's glory, most likely our own

We all worship someone or something

We were built to worship. It's in our DNA

The question is who are what are you worshiping?

QUESTION: When you examine your life, are you living out God's ultimate calling for your life?

When you examine your life, do you see a connection between a lack of worship and issues (self-inflicted problems) going on in your life?

Letting Your Lament Move Towards Repentance

1 Samuel 7:2 (ESV)

2 From the day that the ark was lodged at Kiriath-jearim, a long time passed, some twenty years, and all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord.

Something happens when we start to realize things aren't right. We start to lament. And this is the key to the possibly of change happening. The question is will we realize that change is needed and recognize that our lament is due to God working in us (Remember, He is relentless in seeking his own glory)

What Proper Worship Looks Like

1 Samuel 7:3-4 (ESV)

3 And Samuel said to all the house of Israel, "If you are returning to the Lord with all your heart, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth 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." 4 So the people of Israel put away the Baals and the Ashtaroth, and they served the Lord only.

Brother Lawrence QUOTE

To worship God is to admit that we are entirely contrary to Him and that He is willing to make us like Himself.

There are two components to repentance (both are needed)

- 1) INWARD: It is a returning to the Lord with all your heart
- 2) OUTWARD: It is a putting away of all false worship to false idols

If there is only an inward conviction without outward obedience, then it's just GOOD INTENTIONS

If there is only outward obedience without inward change, then it's just EXTERNAL COMPLIANCE

Without both, change will just be temporary

False gods (idol worship)

Baal was a male storm deity. Ashoreth was a female fertility deity. The understanding was that when these two gods would engage in sexual intercourse, it would produce crops from the ground.

As Israel was an agrarian (farming) society, we begin to understand why worshiping such a god would be so attractive.

- Without rain, there would be no food, which means no life, no security, and no hope.

Who are the Baals and Ashoreth's in our lives today?

Who do we bow down to besides God because we believe our security, life and hope are in them instead?

1 Samuel 7:4 is the most important verse in our passage today

- So the people of Israel put away...
- ...and they served the Lord only

It's one thing to hear the message and know what you're supposed to do, it's entirely another thing to actually respond with action

The choice we make is a response to God's grace

We cannot choose God without God drawing us near to him

John 16:8 (ESV)

And when he (Holy Spirit) comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment

Fighting Our Battles Through Worship

One of the most beautiful pictures of our passage today comes in verses 7-11

Notice how Israel is worshiping when the Philistines are attacking. God delivers them from the Philistines. And through the days of Samuel, the Philistines did not again enter the territory of Israel. Israel even had peace with the Amorites, another group that threatened their security.

This is a big contrast to their previous battle with the Philistines in chapter 4 where they were more using God

The difference was a life of continual worship.

The Worship Driven Life

We were created to worship.

Life only works the way God intended when we live according to how he has created us.

It's only when we're at this place of continual worship and humility that we can properly fight.

The first fight is to be in constant worship and then you'll see God fighting your battles and you'll experience God as your deliverer (salvation).

Application Questions

- 1) Israel lamented their constant misfortunes and defeats in life. They realized the answer was to turn back to God. When life gets tough, what are some things you find yourself turning to (or being tempted to turn to) that might serve to distract you and numb the pain? (e.g. food, alcohol, working out, TV)

We were created to worship God and live for his glory. Life only works when we live as God intended. A big component of that is repentance. Repentance has two components and both are needed: inward and outward.

- 2) Inward repentance is about returning to the Lord with all your heart. What areas of your heart do personally struggle with devoting to God?
- 3) Outward repentance is about putting away of all false worship to false idols. What idols in your life do you find hard putting away? Why are they hard to let go of? What would help you let go of them?
- 4) One of the most beautiful pictures of our passage today comes from verses 7-11, where we see Israel fighting their battle through worship. As a result, they experienced God's deliverance and salvation. Recall and share a time when you saw the power of worship and how you experienced God's deliverance. In what areas now do you need to fight your battle(s) through worship?