

THE ROCK COMMUNITY CHURCH

1 Samuel 4:1-11

"Bring Out the Genie!"

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Speaker: Pastor Drew Hunsley

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17:15

Make your way to 1 Samuel 4.

17:15

But while you're making your way there, I'd like to propose a thesis, an idea that I've got. So I believe whether people will admit it or not, there is some level of religious belief in almost every human.

17:28

People may deny that with their words. People may deny that they believe in God. We've got people all over our culture that would describe themselves as agnostic, that they simply don't care about any religious beliefs or about God, or maybe even atheistic, that they are actively opposed to the idea of God.

17:47

But I don't believe that people's words, that their denial of religion is an accurate test of what they truly believe. The reality isn't found in what people say, but rather in what people do. And the reality, as I observe it, is that when something scary or difficult in life happens, people have a tendency to get really religious really quick.

18:08

And if you've ever been in a hospital before, you will see this, there's a chapel in every hospital, and people will be all over that hospital praying, asking for God to save their loved one or to save them when that diagnosis comes.

18:21

People get really devout really quickly, don't they? Perhaps you've been in a classroom before. If you've ever been in a classroom where a big exam was about to take place, you've seen non-religious people become religious really quickly, as they're praying for mercy, they're praying for wisdom, they're praying for a benevolent teacher that would grade on a curve, whatever it may be.

18:39

See people become really religious really quickly. Anyone who remembers 9/11 happening about 20, 25 years ago, remember in the days and weeks that followed after 9/11, everyone became really religious really quickly, didn't they?

18:55

When crisis hits, when things get scary or difficult, people tend to get really religious. Churches were full after 9/11. And so I think the reality is that people have a craving to possess a power that is beyond them.

19:10

That's what religion looks like, that's what religion means to many people, that they want to have control of their circumstances, they wanna be able to have their wishes come true. And as I think about that, I seem to remember a puffy blue guy that kinda became famous on that premise, right?

19:27

That people would have their wishes come true, right? That for many people I think is the allure, that's the appeal of religion. This morning we're gonna look at a passage in 1 Samuel chapter four, and what we're gonna witness is a terrible defeat of the Israelites,

that they are overrun by their enemies, the Philistines, and they lose thousands of people in a battle.

19:48

And so what we are going to see from them is that they're going to try to harness the power of God in the same way that many people would today as they look to religion to try to control their circumstances, that they might try to harness the power of God for their own purposes.

20:04

So I wanna invite you, we're gonna read our passage this morning, then we'll come back and dive into it a little bit. So we're gonna read 1 Samuel chapter four, verse one, all the way down through verse 11 together.

20:14

I invite you to follow along as I read. It says in verse one that the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out to battle against the Philistines, and they encamped at Ebenezer, and the Philistines encamped at Aphek.

20:28

And the Philistines drew up in line against Israel, and when the battle spread, Israel was defeated before the Philistines, who killed about 4,000 men on the field of battle. When the people came to the camp, the elders of Israel said, why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines?

20:45

Let us bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord hear from Shiloh, that it may come among us and save us from the power of our enemies. So the people sent to Shiloh and brought from there the ark of the covenant to the Lord of hosts, who was enthroned on the cherubim.

20:59

And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God. And as soon as the ark of the covenant of the Lord came into the camp, all of Israel gave a mighty shout so that the earth resounded.

21:12

And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shouting, they said, what does this great shouting in the camp of the Hebrews mean? When they learned that the Ark of the Covenant, the Ark of the Lord had come to the camp, the Philistines were afraid.

21:26

For they said, a God has come into the camp. And they said, woe to us, for nothing like this has happened before. Woe to us, who can deliver us from the power of these mighty gods? These are the gods who struck the Egyptians with every sort of plague in the wilderness.

21:41

But take courage and be men, O Philistines, lest you become slaves to the Hebrews as they have been to you. Be men and fight. And so the Philistines fought and Israel was defeated. They fled every man to his home.

21:55

And there was a very great slaughter for 30,000 foot soldiers of Israel fell. And the Ark of God was captured. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died. These are the words of the Lord. Would you pray with me, church?

22:10

God, we thank you for your word. We thank you for this opportunity this morning that we might come, that we might, as we just sang about a minute ago, that we might humble ourselves before your word.

22:19

And we pray that you would speak for your servants who are listening. God, we pray that you would speak to us. And God, that as we learn from the mistakes of the Israelites here in this passage, God, we pray that you would help us to realize that many of these same mistakes exist in us as well.

22:34

So God, we pray that you would help us to be good students of your word, but not only that we would be hearers that we would understand, but God, that we would be doers of the word, as James tells us to be.

22:43

So God, we pray that you would speak, that we would be listening. And we pray all this in Jesus' beautiful name, amen. All right, well, as we go back and chew on this a little bit more, what we see in the first couple of verses is the Israelites are identifying a problem that arises in the midst of this conflict.

23:02

So we pick up at the beginning of chapter four, you know how numbers work, right? But we pick up the story from the end of chapter three. And so the last three verses of chapter three, what we see, it kind of summarizes in broad strokes the future of Samuel's ministry.

23:18

And so it talks at the end of chapter three about how the Lord was with Samuel. It says that he grew up, that he became great, and it says that as he spoke God's words, that none of them failed. All right, so what that's telling us is that Samuel was in the midst of becoming this prophet.

23:34

He was going to become the mouthpiece of God that would speak God's words to the people. And so it tells us now in verse one, kind of carrying that same message on, it tells us that the word of Samuel came to all of Israel.

23:47

This was a reference to Samuel beginning his role as a prophet of God. And so Samuel had received a message from God in chapter three. Remember, it tells us that God spoke to Samuel, that Samuel passed the message along to Eli, that Eli and his family, that his sons, his evil wicked sons were going to be judged for their evil.

24:08

Eli's house and Israel by extension, and we're going to see God put an end to the wickedness that had been allowed of Hophni and Phinehas, Eli's sons who had been serving as the priests there in Shiloh.

24:20

So chapter four introduces us. We see this group called the Philistines. They show up for the first time in this book, in first Samuel. Now, if you're familiar with the book of Judges, you're gonna remember that Israel has already interacted with the Philistines several times.

24:35

So let me just give you the brief version so that we're all on the same page. In the book of Judges, right before first and second Samuel happens, the Philistines first appeared during the judgeship of a woman named Deborah in Judges chapter three.

24:50

The Philistines and the Israelites were living in kind of the same little local region, the same little local area, and so there were several conflicts that popped up throughout this season of time, season of history, where the Israelites and the Philistines come into conflict with one another.

25:07

And by the time of Samson in the book of Judges, the Philistines had spread their influence inland. They had overcome much of what was previously known to be Israel. So Samson had waged a bitter war against the Philistines all the way up until his death, killing hundreds if not thousands of Philistines.

25:25

And it tells us even at the end of Samson's life, at the end of his story, in the hours of his death, Samson regained the supernatural strength that he had had in his younger years that had been taken from him by Delilah.

25:40

As Samson comes to the end of his life, God gave him one more final push, one more final dose of strength in order for him to pull down the pillars of a Philistine temple. What he did was he dealt a major setback to the enemy as Samson pulls those pillars and Samson was killed as the roof came down on the temple, but the Philistine lords and about 3,000 other Philistines were killed that day as the temple collapsed on Samson.

26:07

And so we've seen this conflict that has already been raging, but now the Philistines show up on the scene here in 1 Samuel. And in 1 Samuel 4, we start our passage with this simple little description of a conflict that arose between Israel and the Philistines.

26:23

Simply put, we're told of a conflict between these two, and so Israel lines up on one side, the Philistines line up on the other side, they clash in battle, and Israel is defeated. It tells us in verse 2 that about 4,000 Israelite men were killed on the field of battle that day.

26:41

It's not a great day to be an Israelite soldier, is it? So we see this problem that arises that Israel has decided, well, I guess we need to deal with this, don't we? The Philistines are coming against us, we've lost thousands of soldiers in this day, and so Israel is now

seeking a solution in verses 3 through 5, but I hate to tell you Israel's seeking a flawed solution.

27:03

After being defeated soundly by the Philistines, Israel gathers the brain-trust together, right? It tells us that the elders of Israel come together and they determine, they come up with a plan. What are we going to do?

27:15

How are we going to respond to this? And so it kind of tells us what their plan is in verses 3 through 5. Let's look at those. It tells us in verse 3 that when the people came to the camp, the elders of Israel said, why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines?

27:31

Let us bring the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord here from Shiloh, that it may come among us and save us from the power of our enemies. So the people sent to Shiloh and brought from there the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord of Hosts, who is enthroned on the cherubim.

27:46

And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the Ark of the Covenant of God. And as soon as the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord came into the camp, all Israel gave a word. Throughout history, being defeated in war has been a significant problem really for any society, for any nation at any time.

28:08

You don't want to go into war and lose. Seems like a simple reality, right? Well, Israel's history reflected a much bigger issue than just this normal military defeat that many other countries have suffered at different times in their history.

28:23

Because this disaster that we see here between the Philistines and overcoming the nation of Israel, losing thousands of soldiers that day, this disaster fits into a pattern that has been going on for generation after generation after generation in the nation of Israel.

28:39

Because the Israelites had entered into this covenant, this commitment that God had made to them, that God was going to be their God and they were going to be his people. They had entered into the Promised Land that God had given to Abraham all those years before.

28:54

They had entered in and they had become this nation. They entered into the Promised Land with the promises of God. But God and the nation of Israel had shown a pattern throughout the book of Judges. It was going to continue through first and second Samuel.

29:09

We see it here and it's going to continue through much of the Old Testament. That pattern, let me just identify for us real quickly. Because the pattern is that we would see that Israel was going to, at some times in its history, be obedient to God.

29:25

That as God had made the promises to Israel to bless them and to provide for them, that Israel at times was obedient to God. And so they would enjoy the generosity of God. They would enjoy the blessings of God as his chosen people.

29:39

But there would also come times that as things were good for a little too long, there would be times where the people of Israel would decide that they were going to ignore God. They were going to reject God.

29:50

They were going to walk away from his laws and they were going to, as the book of Judges says, it says that they did what was right in their own eyes. That's a dangerous path to walk on, isn't it? And so in response to Israel's sin, God at different times would have to provide discipline to them.

30:08

God was going to hand Israel over to an enemy of some sort. There were times where they were taken away into captivity in Babylon. There were times where they were overcome by the Philistines or other armies that would come in.

30:19

And essentially God was disciplining his people for walking away from him. Israel eventually in their suffering, in their realization that they were being disciplined, they would realize their error, they would repent, they would return to God, and then they would return to the blessings of God that God would provide for them as His special people.

30:38

And this cycle happens over and over and over again. Things go well, things get complacent, people do what they think is best, God punishes them. They return to God, they get complacent, they do what they think is right.

30:50

We see this cycle over and over again in the Old Testament. So we're in one of these cycles and it tells us in 1 Samuel 4 that Israel realized some piece of this. They're starting to put some of the pieces together and it seems like that the comments that they make here in verse 3 kind of acknowledges a little bit of this as we see their comments in verse 3.

31:12

It tells us when the people came to the camp the elders of Israel said, why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines? They pointed to God had been the one that defeated them. They weren't focused on the fact that the Philistines were the ones holding the swords, were holding the weapons that had defeated them, but they turned their attention to God's role in allowing them to be defeated.

31:34

They knew that this was God at work. But they didn't respond to God in the way that God had told them to respond to him. They did not respond to God by acknowledging their sin and repenting. Rather, unfortunately for Israel they didn't pause long enough to discern what God was trying to teach them.

31:54

They didn't learn their lesson here in this moment because God's people, we've seen this from the first couple of chapters of 1 Samuel, there was a problem that had arisen in Israel. There was a problem that God's people had forsaken his instruction.

32:11

It said that the Word of God was not frequently heard in those days. God's people had forsaken his direction as they were being led by two evil, wicked priests, specifically, Hophni and Phinehas. But rather than pausing to discern what God might be trying to teach them, what he was trying to show them, instead they come up with a half-prepared plan that they rush into foolish action because they knew that God was a part of the defeat that they had suffered.

32:43

They knew that God was the solution to their problem, but rather than seeking God in humility, what they try to do is they try to manipulate God and abuse his power for their own selfish purposes. It tells us in verse 4 that the plan that they hatched, it tells us that the people sent to Shiloh go into the temple and bring out from there the Ark of the Covenant.

33:05

They called for the Ark of the Covenant to be brought to the front lines. Now if you're not familiar with this Ark, the Ark was a golden box in which the Ten Commandments were kept along with a couple other symbols of how God had worked among his people, how God had miraculously saved and rescued his people out of Egypt, how he had provided for them in the wilderness, how God had given his law to his people.

33:29

The Ark represented, it signified, physically marking the presence of God. In the temple, the Ark of the Covenant rested in the very middle of the temple in the Holy of Holies, in the separate place that was set aside from anyone else, and the high priest was only able to enter in and to enter into the presence of this Ark on rare occasions.

33:52

When Israel had crossed the Jordan River and crossed into Canaan, the Ark went before the people of Israel as a sign of God's promised victory. We see that in the book of Joshua chapter 3, that the Ark had led God's people in, that God had gone before his people and brought them victory as they entered into this land that God had promised to them.

34:12

In Joshua chapter 6, as they came to the great city of Jericho in the land of Canaan, it tells us that the priest carried the Ark in front of the army, that as the priest blew trumpets in the walls of Jericho fell down, it tells us that the Ark of the Covenant was right there in the middle of this battle, that God was leading his people to victory.

34:33

So the elders of Israel now here in 1 Samuel chapter 4, as they are defeated by the Philistines, they look at each other, they have their little elder meeting, and they deduced, you know, we never lose when the magic box is here.

34:46

Somebody go get the magic box, we'll bring the magic box and we'll bring it up here to the front lines, and then we'll defeat the Philistines. Israel viewed the Ark of the Covenant as a sort of lucky rabbit's foot.

34:58

If they just got their lucky trinket, they were going to be okay, but what they didn't realize is the fact that the power was not in the magic box. The power was in the God that the box represented. It was God whose presence had accompanied the Ark as they crossed into Canaan, as they crossed the Jordan River, as they had achieved these victories throughout their history.

35:20

It wasn't the box, it was the God that the box signified. but Israel summoned the magic box. And in a vivid illustration of just how flawed their plan was to show us their mistake, look at in verse four who shows up accompanying the Ark of the Covenant as it shows up at the front lines.

35:42

Verse four, it tells us that the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas were there with the Ark of the Covenant of God. The Ark was the sign of God's presence that was there in the temple, that as the Ark led the army into these different battles, it showed that God was there with them.

36:01

But as the Ark of the Covenant shows up at the front lines, as his attendants, the two men who were most offensive to God, that he had just spoken pronouncements of judgment on just a few verses earlier in 1 Samuel chapter three.

36:18

The two most offensive men could have possibly shown up are there accompanying the Ark to the front lines, Hophni and Phinehas. Israel had fallen into, what one commentator as I was reading this week referred to as, power religion.

36:33

It was this idea that we can manipulate God into giving us what we want or doing what we think is best, that God exists to serve us, not the other way around. So let's look a little more closely at how this story plays out as Israel calls upon God as their magic genie to come in and to save them and to help them win this war.

36:53

Verses six through 11, we're gonna see Israel's extravagant failure. Israel's extravagant failure. The story continues in verse six. It tells us, when the Philistines heard the noise of the shouting, they said, "What does this great shouting "in the camp of the Hebrews mean?' When they learned that the Ark of the Lord had come to the camp, the Philistines were afraid.

37:14

For they said, a God has come into the camp." And they said, "Woe to us, for nothing like this has happened before. Woe to us, who can deliver us from the power of these mighty gods? These are the gods who struck the Egyptians with every sort of plague in the wilderness.

37:30

So take courage and be men, O Philistines, lest you become slaves to the Hebrews as they have been to you. Be men and fight." In the days or the weeks, perhaps proceeding from this statement, the Philistines had just dealt a mighty blow to Israel earlier in 1 Samuel chapter four.

37:50

Verse two, it tells us that 4,000 Israelites had died in this recent defeat. And so now the Philistines have gone back to their camp, Israel has gone back to their camp. Philistines are celebrating their victory and planning what to do next.

38:02

And all of a sudden, they hear cheers and roars of victory coming from the Israelite camp. And they start looking at each other going, why are they happy? What is going on over there? What? Sounds like they won.

38:14

They know that we just killed 4,000 of their men, right? What is the cheering and the celebrating for? When the Philistines learned that Israel had brought the Ark of the Covenant to the front lines, they were afraid.

38:27

They were afraid because of the power of God entering into that camp. They had heard the stories of God's victories in Egypt as God had defeated the Egyptian army. They had heard the stories of God's victories in Canaan as God had defeated, helped the Israelites defeat the city of Jericho and the rest of the land that they had taken.

38:46

The Philistines were right to fear. But we look at their response and I can't decide whether to think that their response is brave or stupid. Because it tells us that they had a fear of God, that their fear of God was appropriate as God had told them, as God had shown the people around the world of His greatness.

39:09

But their response to the fact that God had entered the camp is, buck up guys, it's time to be men and fight. They were gonna run into battle. So that was their response, so what happens? Verses 10 and 11.

39:24

It tells us that the Philistines fought, Israel was defeated and they fled every man to his home. There was a very great slaughter for 30,000 foot soldiers of Israel fell. And the Ark of God was captured and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died.

39:41

It was a terrible slaughter, 30,000 Israelites. In addition to the four, we don't wanna count them in this pile, right? So we've got 30,000 Israelite soldiers are dead. So if you go into the original language, the original Hebrew word that's translated here as defeated in verse 10 is the word "whoopin", right?

39:59

There is an absolute whoopin that takes place here. And the Philistines defeated 30,000 soldiers in a single battle. The nation of Israelites goes home with their tail tucked between their legs, running to their own homes, hiding from what has been just an absolute onslaught at the front lines.

40:20

What God had done in the past, Israel had looked back and seen how God had overcome the Egyptian army, how God had helped them overcome the Canaanites. What God had done to those enemies, God has now done to the Israelites.

40:35

Uh -oh. Not only that, but the Ark of God that they had brought to the front lines has been captured. Verse 11 tells us that the Ark of the Covenant had been taken. Looks like the Philistines were more brave than stupid after all, huh?

40:51

The last note that we see in our passage here this week, at the end of verse 11, it tells us that the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died. All of a sudden we get to verse 11 and we start to realize what God's actually doing here.

41:05

We realize what this whole sad episode of this story is all about, because there's a lot more to this story about how the Ark of the Covenant has taken, the Philistines have some really interesting stuff happen as the Ark of the Covenant is there and how it comes back to the nation of Israel.

41:20

Sorry, spoiler alert for the coming weeks. There's a lot more to this story, but at the core of it, it's about these two men. It's about God doing what he said he was going to do. God had told Samuel, had told Eli, that he would not be mocked, that these two men who were supposed to represent God before the people of Israel had done such a terrible job of doing so.

41:41

They had manipulated God's systems. They had taken what God had given to the people of Israel and they had used it for selfish gain. They had turned the temple and the sacrificial system into a system that was going to make them wealthy.

41:55

It's going to fill their bellies, was going to satisfy their cravings as they had decided to take the women that were there serving in the temple and to use them to gratify their fleshy desires. God was not going to be mocked.

42:10

God had promised Eli, you'll know that this is my judgment because your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are going to die on the same day. There is no coincidence here. God punished Israel for their failure to obey his commands.

42:27

It's a whooping. Finally, we see a better way. We're reminded of the importance of a better way. Israel in this passage had fallen into what one commentator referred to as power religion, that they had this idea that they could manipulate God into giving them what they wanted.

42:48

This idea of power religion, it's this idea that God exists to serve us, to serve our desires, to serve us what we think we deserve. But unfortunately for Israel, they didn't realize that the power of God cannot be manipulated by human activities.

43:07

I think we would be wise to realize the same thing today. Because for us, we can look back on 1 Samuel chapter 4, we can see how foolish it was for the elders of Israel to think that bringing the Ark of the Covenant was going to bring God's power onto their side.

43:22

That they were going to call for the magic box to come forward and think that they could somehow manipulate and harness the power of God to serve their desires instead of what God had commanded. If any human being thinks that he can harness God's power to his own advantage, this story is evidence that that's not how it works.

43:44

Because Israel thought that they had the magic rabbit's foot that they could just come and wave over their situation. It's important for us to realize I cannot manipulate God to bring me success, to bring me prosperity, to bring me happiness in any way, shape, or form.

44:02

Unfortunately for us, we look at this story and I think many of us would look at it and go, man, they were dumb. But this reality shows up today too, doesn't it? We see this pop up in many ways today.

44:16

There are many people around the world, certainly across our country, who would try to use God to get what they want. There are churches all across America this morning that are preaching a message that can be seen openly here with Israel in 1 Samuel 4.

44:32

It's openly seen in this name it and claim it kind of a theology. It's a theology that the prosperity gospel that says if you would just follow God, God wants you to be happy, healthy, and wealthy, have everything you want, have everything you deserve, that God is going to give you your heart's desires.

44:51

If you just give a little seed money, God's going to make you rich, right? We've heard that before. We've seen this pop up in different places. There are many churches that that is the soul message that they're communicating this morning.

45:06

But it can also be a bit more subtle. It can also sneak in that we can find ourselves dealing with this in some ways in our own heart because we can develop a quiet expectation of God's blessings on our life if we serve Him.

45:23

Because it may not come out as God wants me to be rich and happy and healthy and everything is going to go perfectly, but maybe I haven't ever said it, but I've certainly thought it in my own mind. And I'm going to guess that many in this room have probably had some form of this thought run through your mind at different times.

45:42

You know, I go to church. I give generously to God. I serve in different ways. I read my Bible. I do all kinds of things for God. So why did I get sick? Why did my loved one die? Why did I go bankrupt?

45:58

Why did my company go belly up? Why did I get divorced? Why did God allow this to happen to me? Whatever it is. Why did this happen? Charles Stanley talking about this, he told us the Holy Spirit's power cannot be harnessed.

46:15

The Holy Spirit's power cannot be used to accomplish anything other than the Father's will. He's not a candy dispenser. He's not a vending machine. He's not a genie waiting for someone to rub his lamp the right way.

46:28

He is holy God. It's important for us to realize that. Because while we might not say it quite so explicitly, God, you owe me. When life gets hard, those thoughts have a way of creeping in sometimes.

46:49

You know, God, why would this happen? God, I love you. God, my family has done nothing but try to serve you. And we give and we go to church and we do all these things. So why, God? But that's power religion.

47:06

So what's the alternative? What's the other option for us to consider this morning? Well, I dare say it's the religion. It's the clear teaching of the Bible. Because Christianity is not a series of techniques for us to learn.

47:22

For us to learn how to manipulate God's will. For us to harness God's power to accomplish what we want God to accomplish in our lives. Christianity is not manipulating God. Christianity is a humble appeal for God's mercy and grace which he has offered to us through Jesus Christ.

47:43

You know, in Luke chapter 18, there is a magnificent parable that Jesus shares. Just a simple little picture of two different postures of how people can approach God. How we can rightly approach God or how we can wrongly approach God.

47:59

And I think we see in this idea of manipulating God and trying to control God to suit our needs and our desires. I think what we see ultimately is these two postures playing out that are mentioned in Luke 18.

48:13

You can turn to Luke 18 or you can follow along on the screens. Let me just read just four or five short little verses here as Jesus talks about this little parable. Verse nine, it tells us that Jesus also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and treated others with contempt.

48:31

Jesus says in verse 10, two men went up to and into the temple to pray. One a Pharisee, the other a tax collector. The Pharisee standing by himself prayed thus. God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.

48:54

I fast twice a week and I give tithes of all that I get. But the tax collector standing far off would not even lift his eyes up to heaven, but he beat his breast saying, God be merciful to me, a sinner.

49:09

I tell you, this man, the tax collector, went down to his house justified rather than the other, the Pharisee. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.

49:25

If you're here this morning and you're trying to find some secret to unlock the magic code of how to get God to do what you want, that you think you're going to come and you're

going to find the secret to manipulating God to serve your purposes, to give you the perfect life that you deserve, whatever that means to you, I would beg you this morning.

49:47

Just stop. Just stop. That there's nothing here for you that fits that mold because there's nothing in the Bible for you that fits that mold. God is able to do any and everything that we could possibly imagine in our life.

50:01

God has the power to heal. God has the power to bring great wealth. God has the power to bring success and all kinds of incredible things into our lives. But sometimes God says, no, no, that's not what's best for you.

50:13

I'm gonna give you this instead. We don't get to manipulate God and say, God, I deserve this. God is able to do those things for you, but you will not manipulate God into forcing him to give you those things.

50:28

Jesus' parable in Luke 18 shows us the posture that we have to approach God with. Because the idea that we're going to come and manipulate God is that's the response of the proud Pharisee. God, I'm here and you're welcome, by the way.

50:46

Look at how awesome I am. I'm so thankful that you made me as amazing as I am because I never do that. I never do this. I'm practically perfect in every way, right? Pharisee was Mary Poppins, I don't know.

51:01

But the other posture that shows up in Luke 18 is the humble response of the tax collector who comes in, stands at a distance. I'm not even worthy to enter in. He's not even going to try to attempt to raise his head.

51:16

He comes in with his head low and says, God, I don't deserve any of it, but just have mercy on me. God, have mercy on me a sinner. Because that attitude, that posture is the posture that we come to God with.

51:30

That is what biblical obedience, biblical Christianity, that's what it looks like. This isn't something that we come in and we strong arm God into giving us what we deserve. You have to come to God on his terms and humble yourself before him.

51:46

This is the realization that the Israelites needed to come to in 1 Samuel chapter four. This is the realization that the ark should have inspired when the ark shows up in the camp. They should have had the light bulb turn on, but they didn't for some reason.

52:04

The Ark of the Covenant signified the presence of God was there among the people. The Ark of the Covenant wasn't something that they would ever really see on display. The Ark of the Covenant lived inside the inner chambers of the temple.

52:18

This was something that was taken away from them, that the presence of God, they could not stand it. They could not enter into the presence of God as unworthy, sinful people. God had protected them by hiding his presence away in his temple.

52:35

But as the people of Israel see the ark come and show up at the front lines, it should have inspired preparation. It should have inspired self-interpection. Should have elicited sorrow for the sins that they had committed and cries to God for mercy, like the tax collector shows in Luke 18.

52:58

God have mercy on me, sinner. Should have brought humility. JC Ryle says that humility is the very first letter in the alphabet of Christianity. We have to start there. We don't come to God with our chest puffed out saying, God, I'm here, you're welcome.

53:19

We come to God with our heads low, realizing how sinful we are, realizing our need, our desperate need for God to have mercy on us, a sinner. But the Israelites thought that they could control God. Somebody needed to show up in that camp, slap them and tell them, God is not your magic genie.

53:42

God's not your genie. God doesn't exist to serve and to be manipulated by our desires, by our thoughts, by what we think is best for us. Israel's elders revealed their attitude in the use of a single word that I think many of us blew past as we read through the first couple of times.

54:03

And first Samuel chapter four, verse three. When the people came to the camp, the elders of Israel said, why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines? Let us bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord here from Shiloh, that it may come among us and save us from the power of our enemies.

54:25

Israel called for it to be brought out. They called for the ark, trusting that it may come among us, that it may save us. They were trusting in it to save them. Let me tell you something, it doesn't save, he saves.

54:45

It is not the reason why we have hope, he is the reason why we have hope.

54:57

It cannot be the hope that we place all of our weight of expectations on. It will never be enough because it was a box. A man made it. A man laid gold over top of it. It was not the power. God was the power.

55:24

But they missed that. They missed that somehow. And the danger for us this morning is we have to answer this question. Is there an it that you are trusting in the place of God this morning? Do you have an "it"?

55:38

Is there some technique. Is there some routine? Is there some person? Is there some trick that you are trying to control God in some way this morning? Because there's no tricks when we come to God? There is no manipulating God to make sure that it will give us what we deserve.

56:01

What God requires when we approach him, what God requires of us is simple humility as we seek God's guidance and as we follow him, as we walk in obedience to what he has commanded of us, what he has called us to.

56:14

When we trust that he is enough and that he is what's best for us, God will bless us with far more than we deserve. God is able to pour out lavishly upon us. If you were with us a few months ago, we were studying through 1st and 2nd Timothy last year.

56:34

And in 2nd Timothy, Paul is sitting as he's writing these words. He's sitting in a jail in the sewers underneath of Rome. He's sitting in this jail locked up, sitting by himself in certainly what was cold, what was miserable.

56:49

And as he's sitting there talking about how I can't do these things on my own, Bible tells us that God was enough for Paul. Paul appended the words. He said, I've learned the secret of being content when I've had little, when I've had much.

57:17

It wasn't because Paul manipulated God into giving him what he wanted all the time. He said that God was enough when he had nothing or that God was enough when he had everything, because God was enough.

57:30

I learned the secret of how I have nothing or how I have a bound, how I can face hunger and when I have plenty, I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength. The Book of Philippians tells us.

57:42

And in those things, in those statements, people will look at that statement, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me and we go, yeah, that sounds good. And if we're not careful, that sounds like rabbit foot theology.

57:58

That sounds like God, I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength, so I'm going to win, I'm going to succeed, I'm going to be rich, I'm going to overcome this cancer, I'm going to do all these things because Christ is going to make me strong enough to win in everything.

58:12

But that's not what Paul was talking about in those verses. If you read all of the passage, Paul says, I've learned how to have nothing and to have plenty. I've learned how to be hungry and to be full.

58:25

And in all of it, I can do all of these things through Christ who gives me strength. Bible doesn't promise us that things are going to be perfect. Bible doesn't promise us that we get to be rich and that we get to have the dream job and we get to have the best house and the best family and the best car and the best...

58:44

Now the Bible simply promises us Jesus is enough. That whatever it is that you face, whatever circumstances you find yourself in, Jesus is enough. It's what Israel needed to realize. It's what Israel needs to remind us of today.

59:10

It's what we need to remember as we go out from here. Israel was looking for an it to control God. What we need is God. Our prayer team is going to be down here at the front after the service is over.

59:26

They'd love to pray with you about whatever it is that you've got going on in life. Our prayer wall is out the back doors. If you look to the right, we've got the wall there. You can write your prayer requests down.

59:35

Our team will love to pray for those this week during their meeting. But this time, I just want to invite you. Would you pray with me now? God, we thank you for your word and we thank you for the incredible reminder...nudge.

59:51

God, we pray that we would learn the lesson that we need to learn now, before we have to get our paddling that Israel did. God help us to learn that there is no magical "it" for us to control you or to control our circumstances, that the goal of many to just conjure enough power to control their circumstances, God, that is not biblical Christianity in any way, shape, or form.

01:00:24

God help us to be people who understand that you are enough. That you are the one that gives good gifts to your children, that God, you tell us in Romans chapter five that even while we were enemies of yours, even while we were sinners, you sent your son to come and to die for us.

01:00:42

Who does that? God, you saved us when we were enemies. God, your incredible generosity to us that you would bring us in, that you would adopt us as yours, that you would give your children what's best for us, perhaps not what we want, but always what's best for us.

01:01:08

God help us to trust that your way, that your provision, that your word is enough, God help us to hold on to you. God, that we wouldn't look for some magical potion to give us what we think we deserve.

01:01:29

God help us to rest in you. God help us to find our contentment, help us to find our hope, help us to find what we need in you. God, we lay ourselves before you this morning. God, we pray that we would be open-handed worshipers.

01:01:57

God, whatever it is you bring into our lives, we say thank you. Whatever it is that you take away, we say thank you. God, we trust that you are sovereign over us. We lay our lives in your hands. It's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.