

# THE Rock COMMUNITY CHURCH

## 1 Samuel 7

### "Back Where They Belong"

4\_7\_2024

Speaker: Pastor Drew Hunsley

Anaheim Hills, CA | RockCC.com

20:50

Go ahead and make your way to First Samuel chapter seven. First Samuel seven, if you're using one of the black Bibles that's underneath the chairs, it's on page 280.

21:00

And so we are diving back into First Samuel after we've spent a few weeks away. We've gone and wandered around in the book of Matthew as we had Palm Sunday a couple of weeks ago and then Easter last Sunday.

21:13

Perfectly valuable, worthwhile interruptions to our First Samuel series. But we're back in First Samuel. So for those who may not have been with us a few weeks ago or maybe just have a short attention span like I do, let me give you just a short reminder of kinda what's going on in the story that has brought us to First Samuel seven where we're gonna pick up this week.

21:33

So a few chapters ago in First Samuel chapter four, the Ark was stolen. The Ark of the Covenant was stolen from the people of Israel. After Israel tried to manipulate God to get what they wanted, they brought the Ark out and they used the Ark as some sort of a magic trinket that was going to give them what they wanted to help them win a battle.

21:53

They suffered a great defeat at the hands of the Philistines. And so in chapters five and six, we now see the Philistines and their interaction with the Ark of the Covenant and the presence of God as they had captured the Ark of the Covenant in that battle in chapter four.

22:08

And so now they bring it back into their false God's temple. They brought it before their idol Dagon in chapter five and God proved himself to be more powerful than their false God. And continuing in chapter six, we saw after God had inflicted the Philistines with tumors and famine for months, they said, enough of this, we don't want this box anymore.

22:31

And so they sent it back to Israel. And after it was sent back to Israel in chapter six, now we come to chapter seven. After the Israelites in the end of chapter six had mishandled the Ark and had actually seen 70 of their men killed, they decided to send the Ark to Kiriath-jearim, which is where we're going to see it kind of pick up the story this week.

22:53

So what we have here right at the beginning of our passage is about 20 years of Philistine oppression that are passing right at the beginning of our passage this week. Between the last events that we saw in 1 Samuel 4, 5, and 6, now going into chapter seven, we've got about 20 years of time that has passed between those two periods.

23:16

And so let's pick up our story. We're gonna read 1 Samuel chapter seven. We're gonna look at the whole chapter this morning. So I invite you to follow along in your copy of God's words as I read starting in verse one.

23:27

It says in 1 Samuel 7:1, that the men of Kiriath-jearim came and took up the Ark of the Lord and brought it to the house of Abinadab on the hill. And they consecrated his son Eleazer to have charge of the Ark of the Lord.

23:40

And from the day that the Ark was lodged at Kiriath-jearim a long time past, some 20 years, and all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord. And Samuel said to all the house of Israel, if you are returning to the Lord with all your hearts, 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.

24:04

And so the people of Israel put away the Baals and the Ashtaroth and they served the Lord only. And then Samuel said, gather all of Israel at Mizpah and I will pray to the Lord for you. So they gathered at Mizpah and drew water and poured it out before the Lord.

24:20

And on that day, and fasted on that day and said there, we have sinned against the Lord. And Samuel judged the people of Israel at Mizpah. Now, when the Philistines heard that the people of Israel had gathered at Mizpah, the Lords of the Philistines went up against Israel.

24:35

And when the people of Israel heard of it, they were afraid of the Philistines. 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.

24:49

And 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. And as Samuel was offering up a 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.

25:12

And the men of Israel went out from Mizpah and pursued the Philistines and struck them as far as below Beth-car. Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen and called its name Ebenezer.

25:25

For he said, till now the Lord has helped us. And so the Philistines were subdued and did not again enter into the territory of Israel. And the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel.

25:37

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. And there was peace also between Israel and the Amorites.

25:51

And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. He went on a circuit year by year to Bethel and to Gilgal and to Mizpah. And he judged Israel in all these places. Then he would return to Ramah for his home was there.

26:05

And there he also judged Israel. And he built there an altar to the Lord. These are the words of the Lord. Church, would you pray with me at this time? God, we thank you for your word. We thank you for the opportunity to gather here together to humble ourselves before your word and God to consider what it might look like for us to understand what Israel came to understand here in this passage.

26:28

God, they realized the error of their ways and they came and repented and returned to you. And God, you heard their pleas and restored them. And God, we pray that you would help us to consider their message to us this morning.

26:42

That you would help us to consider what that might look like in our own lives. And God, we pray that you would speak to us this morning in the same way that you spoke to them all those years before. Father, we love you. It's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.

26:54

All right, well, as we jump in, the first point in our message is going to be "return to the Lord." We're gonna see in verses one through six, this section talking about how the Israelites return to the Lord.

27:07

And so as we pick up the story in just these first couple of verses, we see this returning to God starting to take place. You know, in verse two, we've got, in chapter one, we've got a little bit of details, kind of historical notes, but in verse two, it tells us that all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord.

27:26

You know, the last words of this verse, of verse two, provide the first sign of repentance that the nation of Israel, the people of Israel, so desperately needed to show. They had been just taking their licks time after time after time, they hadn't learned their lesson for 20 years.

27:43

There were 20 years of oppression that finally made Israel miss God's loving care for them. Finally made them miss the fact that they had been God's chosen and special people years before, perhaps even a generation before, as some may have lived for 20 years in this world and never known anything other than the thumb of the Philistines being on them.

28:07

But as they come to this point in history, they lament the absence of the Lord himself. This isn't just, we're sorry that the Philistines are here. This is, we need God. This verb that's rendered as lamented in our English translation, it conveys this idea of sorrowful groaning.

28:26

They desperately wanted and needed God. This is groaning, it says even specifically after the Lord. This isn't just groaning, right? We're all good at groaning. Anybody in the room good at complaining and groaning and belly aching about stuff?

28:38

Yeah, yep. Anybody that didn't raise their hand is a liar. But this isn't just complaining about their circumstances. This isn't just complaining about something that they don't like. Because the Israelites, by the way, have quite a history of doing that as well, didn't they?

28:55

They've wandered in the wilderness for 40 years because of their complaining that they had refused to obey what God had told them to do. What we see here in verse two though is this desire, this lamenting, this groaning for God to be restored into the position that he deserved in their life.

29:13

It shows a deep desire for a restored fellowship with God. So we continue on in our passage. We look at verses three and four. It says that Samuel said now to all the house of Israel, if you are returning to the Lord with all your heart.

29:29

Then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth from among you and direct your heart to the Lord and serve him only and then he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines. And so the people of Israel went and put away all the Baals and the Ashtaroth and they served the Lord only.

29:44

You know, these verses kind of summarize well the steps that were needed for Israel to repent, for Israel to return to God. Samuel instructs them to return with all your heart. This means that there's impactful change that happens in them.

30:00

This isn't just lip service. This isn't just something that they go, all right, God, we're really sorry, we'll take you back. Right, this isn't just something that they go, I hope things will get better.

30:12

There is heartbrokenness that we see here. If they are returning to the Lord with all their heart, this refers to meaningful sorrow and repentance, not just emotional sadness. You know, that word repent means to change direction.

30:28

It means that if I was walking this way and I were to repent, it means to turn around, to do a 180, by the way, teenagers, right? To do a 180, to turn halfway around and to walk in the opposite direction.

30:40

It means a complete change in direction. That requires a couple of different things, doesn't it? That requires both an inward attitude change, but it also requires outward obedience. Both of those things are accompanied in this whole idea of repenting and changing direction.

31:01

I had the verse that was gonna pop up really beautiful on the screen up there just a minute ago. Just listen to this, the prophet Joel from the Old Testament in Joel chapter two verses 12 and 13. Joel says, yet even now declares the Lord, return to me with all your hearts, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning, and rend your hearts and not your garments.

31:23

Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and he relents over disaster. Yeah, there is no half-hearted obedience here as we see Samuel call for Israel to forsake their idols, their idols that they had kind of adopted and taken in as they had spent 20 years living under Philistine rule while they had started to look at the Philistine gods and their religion and said, well, that looks good too.

31:50

We'll just do a little bit of this and a little bit of that and a little bit of this over here. But what Joel says, the prophet Joel, he says, rend your hearts and not your garments. What that means is, where do we wear our garments?

32:04

We wear our garments on the outside, right? Well, what he's saying is, rend your hearts, not your garments. He's saying God doesn't just require outward obedience, which I think some of them had been doing at different points probably throughout the last 20 years.

32:18

But it says, rend your hearts. It means that everything that's within us, everything about us both inside and out should belong to God. Direct your heart to the Lord and serve him only. Those are the words that Samuel gives to Israel to instruct them on how to turn, how to repent, how to return to the Lord.



32:39

You know, Israel had tried to have their cake and eat it too over the last 20 years. They had been worshiping God in some way, shape or form, but they had also taken in the idols of the Philistines over the past 20 years.

32:51

This word that's unfamiliar to most of us, this word, Ashtaroth, it was a graven image. It was a physical idol that represented a Canaanite goddess. So Samuel is informing Israel here in this section that true repentance that is going to restore God's blessings to them, to restore God's help to them, to restore them to the position that they had enjoyed generations before as God's chosen special people.

33:19

It was going to require a complete change of everything that they knew about life, both internally and externally. They needed to turn and repent and turn to the Lord. So Samuel informs Israel that true repentance would restore God's blessing, and I think we should realize that as well in our own lives.

33:39

As many of us struggle to enjoy the fullness of what it means to live in the presence of God, to be a part of God's family, to enjoy all the benefits that God makes available to us through his power and his blessings in our life.

33:53

By turning from idolatry, Israel enjoyed God's blessings that were being renewed in their lives. And for us, when we turn from idolatry of whatever it is, there's probably not any little statues set up in your closets at home like perhaps they had back then.

34:09

But there are certainly idols in our lives, aren't there? There are certainly things that have a way of creeping in and finding positions of value, perhaps even most important value

in our lives that we would say with our mouths, oh, I love God with everything that I've got.

34:24

But then if we were to look at your checkbook, look at your calendar on your phone to check the ways that you spend your time, the ways that you spend your resources, the things that you love most in life by all external, the way that we show it, by all external signs, God perhaps isn't the most important thing in our life.

34:47

God probably isn't the most important thing to us. We have other idols that have a way of creeping in, but by turning from the idolatry of our sins, by wholeheartedly serving the Lord, we are able to enjoy the blessings of God's life in the same way that the Israelites are going to.

35:03

Now hear me, that's not me saying that there's some guarantee of wealth or health or anything like that, but it is certainly the path to the abundant life that Jesus describes in John chapter 10, when he's talking about the difference between following him and following after Satan in the ways of this world.

35:19

John chapter 10, verse 10, Jesus says, "The thief comes only to steal and to kill and to destroy, but I came that they might have life and that they might have it abundantly." One translation says that they might have life to the fullest.

35:33

That sounds like something that I'm interested in getting. Sounds like something that I'm interested in enjoying and pursuing, right? I wanna live life to the fullest. Well, Samuel is telling Israel here, follow God and you will enjoy that abundant life that's being talked about here.

35:48

He continues on, we see the story continue in first Samuel chapter seven, looking at verses five and six now. It tells us that Samuel said, "'Gather all of Israel at Mizpah and I will pray to the Lord for you.' And 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.

36:08

And Samuel judged the people of Israel at Mizpah." To encourage this national revival that seems to have a way of popping up here, this national revival of true faith and true religion, Samuel convenes this assembly.

36:23

It says that all of Israel is gathered together there. Now, there are several signs that we see that there's true repentance that shows up here in this gathering with all of Israel. We see these three different things.

36:37

It says first that they poured out water before the Lord. Now, it's not exactly clear what the symbolism of that is. We don't have a description of that anywhere in scripture, but it seems if we look around at a couple of different places, pouring out water seems to represent a total commitment to God.

36:54

Jeremiah, the prophet in the book of Lamentations chapter two, he says, pour out your heart like water before the presence of the Lord. Seems to give us this idea of just a full commitment to God. Pour out yourself before God if you are fully committed to Him.

37:09

It says that the Israelites on that day, that they also fasted on that day. Now, fasting is an outward expression of something that happens within us. It's an outward expression of a correct inner attitude of dependence towards God.

37:22

It's a way of us physically saying, God, nothing is more important to me than you are. I know many of us, there's some really important things and making sure that breakfast, lunch and dinner happen and that I enjoy them and that they're at the right time.

37:35

That's have a way of popping up sometimes, don't they? Those are some priorities for us. We think about food and a lot of times we're thinking about dinner right around lunchtime, right? Well, I wonder what I'm gonna have for dinner tonight.

37:47

Israel is saying outwardly and inwardly that God is most important in their lives, that God is the most important thing to them, that this outward expression of God, we don't want food, we want you. This showed the contrition and the humility of Israel as they approached God and as they returned to God, acknowledging their sinfulness.

38:05

But lastly, it tells us that the people confess their sin. It says that they lamented that we have sinned against the Lord. Now, just doing some things, just mere ritual without actually submitting ourselves before God, that's not enough.

38:18

God doesn't ask us to just do some outward things so that people would look at us and see that we're religious. Mere ritual without spiritual submission is not enough. God's desire is not just for outward expressions of obedience, but with outward and inward submission, both with the submission of the hands and the heart.

38:42

We see Israel in this moment as they gather together with their nation, as they humble themselves before the Lord, it shows us that they are truly turning their back on the direction that they had been going.

38:53

They acknowledged it vocally, they acknowledged it with their actions, they even poured themselves out before God, said, God, we're yours. Israel has returned to the Lord. But now we see God begin to act in the story a little bit, and we see the second point of our passage that we're looking at this morning is that the verses 7 through 11 describe their escape from the Philistines.

39:20

Verses 7 through 11 are the escape from the Philistines. Let's look at verses 7 and 8 again together. It says, continuing this story, now when the Philistines heard that the people of Israel had gathered at Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel.

39:36

And when the people of Israel had heard of it, they were afraid of the Philistines. And the people of Israel said to Samuel, do not cease to cry out to the Lord our God for us, that he might save us from the hand of the Philistines.

39:48

You know, when the word of the Israelite gathering reached the Philistines, the Philistine leaders didn't like it, right? They had had their thumbs successfully on Israel for the last 20 years that they had subdued Israel.

40:01

They were essentially just an outpost for the Philistine empire. Safe for us to say that the Philistine leaders weren't big fans hearing that this giant national gathering of the Israelites is happening.

40:17

Maybe they're trying to rise up, maybe they're planning to overthrow us, maybe they're up to something. And so this gathering of the Israelites, it receives a swift response from the Philistines in verse 7.

40:31

It says that, fearing that such a gathering is for hostile purposes, the lords of the Philistines went up. They went up to Israel, they were going up there to squash what they perceived to be an insurrection or an uprising among these people.

40:45

You know what Israel does when they hear word of this? They're afraid, right? They're scared. They remember how they have previously suffered incredible losses at the hands of the Philistines. There were, if you remember back in 1 Samuel chapter 4, I think there were 34 ,000, no, 24 ,000.

41:09

There was a huge number of people that were killed, Israelites that were killed in these two battles as Israel had come up against the Philistines and thought they were going to take them on. They thought they were going to bring the ark out and scare the Philistines into obeying them or to submitting to them or maybe God was going to help them win this battle.

41:28

And they suffered incredible losses at the hands of the Philistines. But if you notice, what we see here between the response of Israel in chapter 7 and the response that Israel gave in chapter 4, there's a drastic difference.

41:44

There's a significant difference between their two responses because in 1 Samuel chapter 4, we made a special point of this when we were preaching through this

passage a few weeks ago. In 1 Samuel chapter 4, Israel sought to manipulate God's power by bringing out the magic box.

41:59

You remember that? We talked about Israel. They said, well, we'll win this battle by just bringing out the ark of the covenant that God always helps us win when the box is here. And so they brought out the magic ark to save them.

42:13

But in 1 Samuel 7, they didn't seek to manipulate God with some magic box. In 1 Samuel chapter 7, it says that Israel sought God, that Israel asked Samuel to pray fervently for them, that God might save them from the Philistines.

42:26

You remember how they had talked about the ark in chapter 4. They pointed back in chapter 4, verse 3, they called for the ark to come to the front lines because they said that it may come among us and save us.

42:40

On chapter 7 and verse 8, what we see is that Israel learned their lesson. They asked Samuel to pray to God that he might save us. That was the key point from a few weeks ago. They were looking at it, the box, and hoping that the box would save them, that the ark of the covenant was going to have some magical power, but it wasn't the box.

43:00

What they didn't realize over 20 years is the fact that a piece of furniture wasn't the thing that was going to save them. It was the God whose presence was symbolized by that ark that was going to save them.

43:11

So now they finally learned their lesson after 20 years and they say, Samuel, pray to God so that he might come and save us from the hand of the Philistines that was coming. We continue on now in verse 9.

43:22

It says that Samuel took a nursing lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the Lord. Samuel cried out to the Lord for Israel and the Lord answered him. And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to attack Israel.

43:37

But the Lord thundered with a mighty sound that day against the Philistines and threw them into confusion and they were defeated before Israel. The men of Israel went out from Mizpah and pursued the Philistines and struck them as far as below Beth-car.

43:51

Samuel makes this offering and seeks God's help on behalf of Israel. Samuel offered a sacrifice to atone for, to cover up, to plead for forgiveness for the people's sins. You know, that's the only way that sin can be forgiven all throughout scripture.

44:09

That the Bible says in the book of Hebrews chapter nine that without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sin. Sin against God is deserving of death. All the way back, you can go all the way back to the very beginning, to the book of Genesis, all the way in the first few days, the first few weeks of creation when Adam and Eve were created by God and had a perfect relationship with God.

44:31

But when Adam and Eve sinned, death entered into the world. That when Adam and Eve sinned, God had to separate them from the tree of life because they could not continue to live forever without some sort of a punishment that death is the reasonable punishment for sin.



44:50

Every sin against God's law requires the death penalty because sin cannot be permitted to exist in God's holy presence. Essentially sin, every sin is cosmic treason. Think about that as the creator, as the creation attempts to overthrow the creator by saying, God, I know what's best, I'm gonna do what I want instead of what you have told me is best.

45:12

Every time we try to overthrow God's ways by doing what we think instead of what God commands, we're deserving of the death penalty. Treason is a capital offense in any society and anywhere throughout human history.

45:26

If you try to overthrow the leader, you're gonna get yourself in trouble. But God, in his mercy, made a way for forgiveness, that there's a substitute that was made available to pay the penalty for sin.

45:41

That substitute in the Old Testament that we see here in 1 Samuel 7, that sacrifice was made by an animal, sacrificial animal like this lamb that was being offered by Samuel. It was able to give its life that it gave its blood so that the sinners could be forgiven.

45:59

Well, that same principle applies throughout the New Testament as well. We don't have any lambs that are being sacrificed and burnt up here today. But that sacrifice that we celebrate, that we point to, that we remember, and we have our hope in, was the sacrifice that Jesus gave when he laid his life down as the perfect sacrifice once and for all.

46:19

God gave his own son to come into the world to save his people from their sins. 1 Peter chapter one, jot this one down in your notes. First Peter one, verses 18 and 19. Peter says, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited by your forefathers,

not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like a lamb without blemish or without spot.

46:46

Jesus is that sacrificial lamb that was offered in the same way that Samuel offers a lamb here to cover the sins, to cover and atone for the sins of the Israelite people. Jesus was that sacrifice for us.

47:02

Jesus was that one that came and filled that role for us. In response to Israel's repentance and sacrifice, God's favor returns to them. In 1 Samuel 7, we see that they humbled themselves before God, that they came before God, that Samuel offered this sacrifice on their behalf, and it tells us that God's favor returns to them, that God helps them defeat the Philistines in this dramatic reversal of fates, as the two had had had conflicts for year after year after year.

47:34

Philistines had experienced victory after victory over Israel, but here in chapter 7, it says that God throws the Philistines into confusion, that there's a boom of thunder. Anybody ever been in a storm that it just shook your bones when you heard the thunder crack and roll through?

47:49

I know we don't get big thunderstorms here often. Anybody that's ever traveled to the Midwest or traveled somewhere, maybe we've had those moments, it shakes the windows, right? It will scare you to death if you were outside, and it sounds like the sky just cracks open.

48:04

I have to imagine that this crack of thunder was greater than anything else that anyone has ever heard in history, that God throws the Philistines into confusion. It says when the skies crack and thunder in this moment, that God saves the Israelites from the hand of

the Philistines, that the Lord thundered with a mighty sound that day against the Philistines, and threw them into confusion.

48:28

They suffer an overwhelming defeat at the hands of the Israelites, as God has now turned the tides in this battle. God has stepped in, and God has rescued the Israelites as they escape from under the thumb of the Philistines in verses 7 through 11.

48:42

But now, the last point of our message, the third point, in verses 12 through 17, we see the Israelites living in victory, living in victory. In verse 12, it tells us we kind of turned the page a little bit on what's been happening here.

48:58

It tells us that they've gained victory over the Philistines, but now in verse 12, it says that 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.

49:11

Samuel erects this monument stone, he names it Ebenezer, not after Scrooge, right? Scrooge was later. Ebenezer stone was first. Literally translated, this is "the stone of help," is what that word, what that name means.

49:25

Now, I think it's ironic, you may remember hearing this word, Ebenezer, a few weeks ago, because Ebenezer was the location of Israel's defeat at the hand of the Philistines 20 years earlier. And remember when all those people were killed, as they thought they knew what was best, and so they brought the Ark of the Covenant to the front lines, that happened at Ebenezer.

49:44

So, it's 1 Samuel chapter 7 now, as Samuel sets up this monument stone to remind them of what God has done this day. It says that he named the stone Ebenezer, for he said, until now the Lord has helped us.

49:58

That's what happened. That's what we see here, that God has helped his people by saving them from their enemies. And what I love what Samuel does here, Samuel does this beautiful thing for the people of Israel and setting up this memorial stone to remind them of what had happened this day, to remind God's people of God's faithfulness in this moment.

50:21

So that both the current generation could look back and future generations could look back at this stone and they could remember how God had saved them from their enemies on this day. You know, I think reminders like these can be helpful to the nation of Israel, certainly, as Samuel did this, but I think they can also be helpful to us.

50:39

That we can have these memorial type things in our life. That we can have these reminders for us about how God has helped us in times of trouble. And those things, those reminders can help us in future times of trouble, right?

50:52

If God has walked faithfully with me through all these things that I can look back on and remember, well, you know what? Why in the world would I be afraid of what I'm facing now? To remember the past, to remember the faithfulness of God, helps me face the things that I'm dealing with today.

51:10

Samuel does this incredible thing for the people of Israel because he sets this stone up to remind them, hey, God is good. Hey, God is powerful. Hey, God is in control. And when we humbled ourselves before God, God was able to work in a mighty way.

51:27

So the next time the Philistines came rolling in, you think any of them went, look at the stone, don't forget. We have these moments in our lives that life gets busy and things get hard and it's easy for us to focus on what's going on around us.

51:41

And we forget the fact that God has been good and God has been faithful and God has worked time and time and time again. Sometimes it's hard for us to see it in those moments. Sometimes it's hard for us to see it when we're going through whatever that trial is, whatever that experience is.

51:58

It's hard for us to realize, oh no, God's doing something here. But we have the benefit of hindsight that when we get on the other side of it, we're able to look back and go, oh, I see what God was doing.

52:09

Now I understand. Now I get it. Well, the way that we successfully navigate through the next one is to remember that God has been good all those times before, that God has been faithful, that God has saved, that God has worked on our behalf.

52:26

And those monuments can be reminders to us in the future and even can be reminders to future generations to help us remember what God has done so that we can return to Him and be faithful the next time, realizing that God is the one who comes and God is the one who helps and God is the one who saves.

52:48

Yeah, I love this. I saw this. I was reading through here. I said, you know what? I one read through this passage and I knew. I know what song we're gonna finish with this week. I know what song we're gonna sing at the end.

53:01

Anybody reading through this passage, have anything jumped to mind for you? Verse 12, it says that Samuel took a stone, set it up between Mizpah and Shen, called its name Ebenezer, for he said, till now the Lord has helped us.

53:16

Almost word for word, we have those same words in an old famous hymn called Come Thou Fount. Come thou fount of every blessing, that the hymn taken from this passage says, here I raise my Ebenezer, hither by thy help I'm come, and I hope by thy good pleasure safely to arrive at home.

53:34

And we remember how God has proved His faithfulness and love and then we trust that God is going to come through for us again. That's the point of this Ebenezer stone, to remind us that God has been good before and God will be good again.

53:48

The same song reminds us how we can have victory in our future battles with sin, how we can have victory over temptation and the reality that we're prone to wander. I love that line, right? That we remember God's faithfulness in the past and then we remember God's grace in the presence, in the present.

54:08

Come thou fount another verse that says, oh to grace how great a debtor daily I'm constrained to be. Let thy goodness like a fetter, like a tool that would be used to bind ox together. Let thy goodness like a fetter bind my wandering heart to thee.

54:25

Prone to wander, Lord I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love. Here's my heart, Lord, take and seal it. Seal it for thy courts above. That song is taken out of this passage, that the reminder that God was faithful to Israel helped them to be faithful in the future and we have that same reality.

54:43

God remind us of your goodness in those times when life gets hard. We continue on verses 13 through 17. We have this sort of a here's what happened in the last few verses of this passage. Verse 13 it tells us that the Philistines were subdued.

54:59

They did not enter again into the territory of Israel. The hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. The cities that the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel.

55:10

From Ekron to Gath and Israel delivered their territory from the hand of the Philistines. There was also peace between Israel and the Amorites. It tells us that Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life.

55:23

That he served as their leader, their political leader, their military leader. That he also, it says continued, he went on a circuit each year, year by year to Bethel and to Gilgal and to Mizpah. And he judged Israel in all these places.

55:38

And then he would return to Ramah for his home was there. And there he also judged Israel. And he built an altar to the Lord. His battle marks a turning point for Israel. Marks a turning point for Israel and their relationship with the Philistines that this battle ended the Philistine oppression that they were experiencing.

55:59

That God had subdued the Philistines and held them at bay for the rest of Samuel's days. There was this time of peace that has been ushered in in Israel. Not only peace with the subdued Philistines, but also peace between Israel and the Amorites, another enemy on a different side of the country.

56:16

Those were the original inhabitants of this promised land before Israel conquered that land in the book of Joshua, if you're familiar with those stories. It tells us that Samuel served as a judge. That he was the leader of the country for all the days of his life.

56:31

That he was a political leader, a military leader. That he provided religious instruction as he held the office of prophet and priest as well. But you know what, as we kind of look at this whole message, this whole narrative, this interesting story, we look at this passage and what we see here in this chapter in 1 Samuel 7, there's this turning point in Israel's fate.

56:57

What was the turning point? What was the thing that changed in Israel that led God from going, no, no, no, the Philistines are going to keep you under their thumb to now being set free, to being liberated from the Philistines.

57:08

What was it in Israel's posture that changed? What was their posture towards God? It was the way that they responded towards God. When Israel had had this view years before of God being a force to be employed, to be a weapon to be swung around when they needed him to do their bidding, Israel suffered mightily.

57:27



Israel suffered great losses at the hands of the Philistines. But when Israel came to their senses, when Israel realized that God was not some secret weapon for them to bring out in the time of need, but rather that he was worthy of their wholehearted devotion, that he was not a thing to be employed, but a God to be followed and a God to be served, they witnessed an incredible reversal in their situation.

57:52

I think that's got some reminders built in there for us, doesn't it? It's got some things that we need to kind of put into place in our own life and realize today as well. This false religion that some people have a way of kind of building their lives around, that it's this impersonal attempt to manipulate God for our own purposes.

58:11

That was dangerous and it didn't work for the Israelites in 1 Samuel. And it doesn't work today either. People that think, I'm just going to do a few things for God and God's going to give me what I want, that they quickly become disillusioned.

58:25

They quickly get disappointed in the fact that God is not just going to give them everything that they want. If you say, God, I went to church, so I'll have the Lamborghini in the driveway this afternoon... sounds cool, but no, that's not how it works, right?

58:40

That's not how this works. When Israel realized that God was not some secret weapon, but was a God that was worthy of their devotion, it changed the whole outlook for them. This false religion is this attempt to manipulate God into giving us what we want, but that's not what we see in 1 Samuel as being the method of success.

59:02

It's not what we see today as the method of success. This isn't something that we just see in 1 Samuel. This happens every day when people wrestle with thoughts of, I go to church every week, I'm a good person, but why is this happening to me?

59:16

Anybody ever had those thoughts kind of pieced together in their life? God, I'm a good person. I try really hard. I do everything that I can to serve you and to obey you and to give you everything that you ask for.

59:27

Why this? Why are you punishing me? Why am I the one that has to deal with this sickness? Why is this relationship falling apart? Why are these things happening to me? God, why did I get fired? Why is the money gone?

59:38

God, why? And we get frustrated and we wag our fist at God and we say, God, why is this happening to me? But there's... Did you notice it? In that statement, there's an implied, "God owes me" in that statement.

59:52

It's a thinly veiled version of the exact same thing that the Israelites were doing here in 1 Samuel. Because true Christianity is a personal relationship with God who reconciles us to Him through His Son.

01:00:07

When we love God and obey God because He deserves it, it looks entirely different than this quid pro quo type of a relationship with God of, I'll give you something and you give me something that the Israelites tried for so long, that many today try for so long.

01:00:24

When we expect to get some favor in return for our obedience, we're in trouble when we start to do that. When we start to walk that path, when we expect to get some favor in return, we're placed into the dangerous position of not realizing that we have missed the mark completely.

01:00:42

Now we have been given an incredible blessing when we get the opportunity to know God. We're placed into the blessed position of being a beloved son or daughter of the Most High. That should be enough.

01:00:55

That is plenty for us. We don't need to give God our wish list like He's Santa Claus and say, God, I'll take a pony and I'll take this and I'll take... Whatever it is that God brings into our life, we can trust that that's what's best for us because He's a good Father who gives good gifts to His children.

01:01:14

You know, we're going to conclude our service this morning by taking communion, by reflecting on the sacrifice of Jesus, that He was that Lamb, that Samuel sacrifices, the symbol of what that Lamb was pointing towards was Jesus Christ, that He was the perfect sacrifice that came to pay the sin debt, to pay the death penalty for our sinfulness.

01:01:37

We're gonna finish by taking communion, but then we're going to finish by singing that hymn that I talked about here just a few minutes ago, that hymn that finds its source here in First Samuel chapter seven, Come Thou Fount.

01:01:49

I wanna encourage you, I know the words are gone, so maybe you grab your phone sometime between now and five minutes from now and you Google the words, right? It's really easy to find them. But we're gonna sing, and we're gonna reflect on those words as we sing this old hymn to our king, where we sing, Here I raise my Ebenezer, hither by your help I am come, and I hope by thy good pleasure safely to arrive at home.

01:02:11

God is gonna carry us through, if we simply rest in him, if we look to him, if he is the one that we find hope in, if he is the one that carries us through, if he is it, we're gonna experience life a little differently than we do if we just look to him as some magic box.

01:02:30

We just look to him as some tool to be used to give us what we want. God will carry us through if we simply rest in him. We've got communion elements that are set out here, we've got tables at the front, we've got one in the back as well, but I'm gonna read from 1 Corinthians 11 as we prepare to partake of communion together.

01:02:51

Then after I pray in just a moment, I wanna encourage you to come and to grab these elements. If you are in Christ, if you have placed your faith in him, come and partake. If you haven't, there's symbolism here that this is not a time for you, but if you are in Christ, if you have placed your faith in him, if he is your savior this morning, after I read, I wanna encourage you to come to take these elements, to take them back to your seats, to reflect, to pray, to prepare your heart, to take communion, and then whenever you're ready, you can feel free to take those elements at your seat.

01:03:24

Let me read from 1 Corinthians 11. Talking about Jesus' institution of communion, it says in 1 Corinthians 11:23, I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed, he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, this is my body, which is for you.

01:03:44

Do this in remembrance of me. And in the same way, also, he took the cup after supper, saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me. Church, would you pray with me now?

01:03:59

God, we thank you for, God, we thank you for the sacrifice of Jesus, that he would be the perfect lamb to take away the sins of the world. God, we thank you that we are able to come before you and to know that you hear us, to stand in your presence, knowing that we can be accepted because of the sacrifice of Jesus.

01:04:21

In the same way that Samuel and the people of Israel humbled themselves and acknowledged their sinfulness and acknowledged their need, as Samuel offered a sacrifice, God, we thank you that Jesus is our sacrifice this morning.

01:04:32

But God, we also, God, we pray that you would help us to remind ourselves in life in the same way that Samuel did as he erected this Ebenezer stone. God, that as he pointed the people of Israel back to remind them of how you have been good and you have been faithful in the past, and that they would be able to trust and know that you are going to be faithful to fulfill your purposes in the future as well.

01:04:59

God, help us to do those same things in our own life. God, help us to live with those reminders from the past, constantly preaching to us, constantly redirecting our eyes, constantly pointing us back to you because you have been faithful in the past and you will be faithful in this moment now, and you will be faithful in the future as well.

01:05:21

God, we thank you for these reminders. God, we thank you for the opportunity to gather and to humble ourselves before you. And God, we thank you for Jesus. We thank you for his sacrifice. We thank you for the cross. It's in his name we pray, amen. Take and eat.