

1 Samuel: Glory Departed

1 Samuel 4:1-22

After suffering a great loss in battle, Israel's army decides to take things into their own hands and put hope in what God provided rather than God himself. Instead of seeking God, repenting, and waiting on him, they immediately decide that bringing the ark of the covenant into war with them should lead them to victory. However, they still lose the battle, trusting in the false hope of the ark of the covenant rather than God the Ruler and Creator.

Application

1. When you evaluate areas of your life where you don't know what to do next, what would it look like to seek God rather than come up with your own solution? How have you already tried to take things into your own hands?
2. Where could you be trusting in created things, symbols, or people in your life more than you trust in God? (e.g. a curriculum, a spouse, "I'm an irreplaceable leader at church", a child, re:generation, baptism, community, etc.) What keeps you from surrendering and trusting God fully with that thing, symbol, or person?
3. How do these two ideas below either frustrate you or give you comfort? Have you seen them to be experientially true in your life? When?
 - a. God will suffer shame rather than allow us to continue faking it.
 - b. God will allow you to be disappointed to awaken you to who he really is.
4. Like the religious people of Israel who trusted in symbols of God rather than God himself, Christians can develop the same mindset. We can think too confidently, "God's glory can't depart from me", while actually using that as an excuse to disobey him. How does this warning resonate with you? Where could you be "faking it"?
5. Read 2 Corinthians 13:5. Where could you be living in rebellion or using God to bless you? How might you be using him to further your own needs and desires?

Key Points

- Instead of seeking God, repenting, and doing the hard soul work of turning towards him after their great loss, Israel takes things into their own hands and continues to fail.
- The ark of the covenant symbolized God ruling (footstool of God), forgiving (mercy seat), and speaking (10 Commandments).
- Instead of trusting God, Israel trusts in the thing that God has provided.
- Trust in God himself not what he provides for you.
- Symbols of God should stir our affections for God and draw our imagination back to him.
- God gives us good gifts because he is GENEROUS. God keeps his promises because he is FAITHFUL.
- One of God's promises is to make us holy. He is faithful to that promise even when it is painful to us.
- If you're not a Christian, heed this caution: if God is this fearless in disciplining his children who are in a covenant relationship with him, then what do you think it will be like for you to disregard him and try to hold onto your sin?

Other Scripture References

[2 Corinthians 13:5](#)

[Hebrews 12:6-7](#)

[1 Peter 4:17](#)