

“Revival in Israel”
1 Samuel 7:2-14

INTRO:

We love to sing the song, ‘*Victory in Jesus.*’ The question is do we know how to have victory in our lives through our Lord? The last judge and the first prophet in Israel, Samuel, taught Israel how to have victory in the LORD instead of defeat.

We pick up our story in **1 Samuel 7** many years after the events in **chapters 5-6**. Israel had brought the Ark of the Covenant to the battle field as a kind of lucky charm. They thought as long as they had the Ark they could not lose to the Philistines. Yet, God did not honor their faulty thinking and the Philistines defeated them and took the Ark captive. Then the Ark began a trip around the cities of Philistia. No city wanted the Ark. Wherever it went, Yahweh judged the Philistines of that city. Then finally, they sent it back to the border town of Bethshemesh. When the men of Bethshemesh looked into the Ark, God struck them dead. The rest of the town sent the Ark on to Kiriath-jearim. As our passage opens, the Ark has been at Abinadah’s house for twenty years. Samuel now appears on the scene grown-up and ready to call Israel back to her God. How did he call Israel back?

I. The Road Back Began with Repentance (v. 2-6)

II. The Bumps in the Road Back (v. 7-11)

III. Remember and Maintain Devotion to Stay with God (v. 12-14)

I. The Road Back Began with Repentance (v. 2-6)

A. *“From the day that the ark remained at Kiriath-jearim, the time was long, for it was twenty years; and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD. Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, ‘If you return to the LORD with all your heart, remove the foreign gods and the Ashtaroath from among you and direct your hearts to the LORD and serve Him alone; and He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines.’” (verses 2-3)*

Samuel the prophet recognized God was once again working in the hearts of Israel. Since this is still the time of the Judges, there is no reason to assume Israel still followed the “sin-cycles” pattern. Becoming weary of the Philistine oppression and recognizing they needed to return to the Living God, Israel longed for the LORD.

B. The detail of the long time and the fact that Israel longed after the LORD, led to Samuel’s proclamation and ministry.

1. God uses circumstances to bring us to the place that we will listen to the inward work of the Spirit of God in our hearts and cause us to repent and seek God. This is what happened to Israel.

2. Then Samuel stepped forward to take them by the hand and lead them the rest of the way back. He started with their repentance. God has to work repentance in our hearts. The Lord shows us our sinfulness and makes us feel the futility of our striving on our own. So we seek out the Lord and throw ourselves in repentance on Him. Samuel said to Israel, "I know you are there, but if you really repent, there must be outward actions that show your heart's commitment to God." They could have discarded their gods, but still had no repentance. Outward action was not enough. Still, inner contrition must produce outward action.

3. The negative action was to rid themselves of all false gods. The positive step was to turn their hearts to the LORD and to serve Him. Our repentance needs to follow this example.

C. Israel did exactly what Samuel exhorted them to do. So, Samuel called them to go to Mizpah and formally commit themselves to the LORD. At Mizpah, Israel poured water out before the LORD, and fasted and Samuel prayed for them and judged them there.

II. The Bumps in the Road Back (v. 7-11)

A. Everyone is repenting and turning to God. A revival is breaking out. Nothing bad could cause a problem now is there? **(1 Samuel 7:7-9)**

"Now when the Philistines heard that the sons of Israel had gathered to Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the sons of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines. Then the sons of Israel said to Samuel, 'Do not cease to cry to the LORD our God for us, that He may save us from the hand of the Philistines.' Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered it for a whole burnt offering to the LORD; and Samuel cried to the LORD for Israel and the LORD answered him."

B. One commentator observed. "The Philistines heard. The Philistines always hear." (Dale Ralph Davis, *Looking on the Heart*) The Philistines always hear because, when God works, Satan always opposes. Israel came to Mizpah for a Revival meeting not for a war. They probably packed defensive weapons, but they were not prepared to fight the Philistine forces. The sons of Israel were terrified. So, they turn to their only option, God Himself.

1. This is how God sometimes works. He knocks the props out from under us to make us trust Him. When God knocks the props out, we can do nothing else but trust Him alone.

2. Israel, unprepared and undrilled, got ready to fight. Meanwhile, Samuel offered a sacrifice and prayed to the LORD. The last words of **verse 9** are short and eloquent. ***“The LORD answered him.”***

C. What did the answer look like? (1 Samuel 7:10-11)

“Now Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, and the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel. But the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day against the Philistines and confused them, so that they were routed before Israel. The men of Israel went out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, and struck them down as far as below Beth-car.”

God fought the battle with them, and produced the defeat of the Philistines the sons of Israel sought. God can turn potential defeat into resounding victory.

III. Remember and Maintain Devotion to Stay with God (v. 12-14)

A. Israel repented and genuinely sought the LORD. Because they threw themselves by faith on the LORD, He delivered them. But our commitment with the Lord needs to be maintained. **Verses 12-14** describe how Samuel sought to maintain the people’s spiritual commitment to God.

“Then Samuel took a stone and set it between Mizpah and Shen, and named it Ebenezer, saying, ‘Thus far the LORD has helped us.’ So the Philistines were subdued and they did not come anymore within the border of Israel. And the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. The cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron even to Gath; and Israel delivered their territory from the hand of the Philistines. So there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.”

B. The most important thing we can do to maintain and rejuvenate our commitment to the Lord is to remind ourselves of all that God has done for us. Keeping a record in a notebook or in our minds and reminding ourselves that ***“Thus far the LORD has helped us.”*** Implied in this is that if He has brought us this far, He will not fail us now.