

“The Glory Has Departed”
1 Samuel 4:19-22
(Preached at Trinity, July 3, 2016)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we entered **Chapter 4** we find just how low the spiritual state of Israel had fallen. We find them going to war with the Philistines. What we do not find is any indication that they sought the face of God. Samuel has been ordained as their prophet but there is no indication they sought his counsel. They saw no value in hearing from God. This is the greatest problem of Christians today—failing to see the value of hearing from God. And so we undervalue God's Word.
2. We find the initial battle had poor results—they lost 4 thousand men. They understood enough about the sovereignty of God to know this was from His hand.
1 Samuel 4:3 NAU - "Why has the LORD defeated us today before the Philistines?"
3. What we do not find is any indication that they searched for the reason of God's displeasure.
 - a. It would have been prudent to call a time of prayer and fasting and seeking God. It would have been good to give themselves to self-examination.
Psalms 139:23-24 KJV - "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: ²⁴ And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."
 - b. Instead of examining their hearts before God and crying out for His aid the elders called for the Ark to be brought. This wasn't a call for God's aid. It was a superstitious effort to call down the power of God.
4. The result was devastating. They were sorely defeated. Thirty thousand men lost their lives including Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas. Worst of all, the Ark of the Covenant was captured by the Philistines. Upon hearing this news, the aged Eli fell back in his chair and broke his neck thus ending the house and priesthood of Eli. God's word was fulfilled.
1 Samuel 3:12-14 NAU - "In that day I will carry out against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. ¹³ "For I have told him that I am about to judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons brought a curse on themselves and he did not rebuke them. ¹⁴ "Therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever."
1 Samuel 2:34 NAU - "This will be the sign to you which will come concerning your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas: on the same day both of them will die."
5. Phinehas' wife was pregnant and upon hearing of the death of her husband, her father-in-law, and that the Ark had been captured she went into labor. She would die in childbirth but she gave birth to a son. Before she died she declared that his name would be Ichabod. Various meanings have been given to this name which is a form of the Hebrew word for glory - כְּבוֹד - Phinehas' wife gives us the meaning - "The glory has departed from Israel"

6. This name has become synonymous for the removal of God's glory. We have to remember the significance of the Ark. It testified to Israel of the presence of God. A careful distinction must be made here which is where Israel erred. The Ark was NOT God and contained no intrinsic power. It only symbolized His presence. This is the silliness of the movie, "Raiders of the Lost Ark." The movie portrayed some intrinsic power in the Ark. The purpose of the Ark was to testify to Israel God's presence with them. It was to declare His holiness and His glory. His shekinah glory emanated from it. This was witnessed when Solomon dedicated the Temple:
2 Chronicles 7:1-3 NAU - "Now when Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the house. ² The priests could not enter into the house of the LORD because the glory of the LORD filled the LORD'S house. ³ All the sons of Israel, seeing the fire come down and the glory of the LORD upon the house, bowed down on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped and gave praise to the LORD, saying, "Truly He is good, truly His lovingkindness is everlasting."
7. Phinehas' wife rightly declared, "The glory has departed from Israel." What she failed to see was God's glory didn't simply leave with the Ark. It had left years ago. Her very husband was testimony to this fact.
1 Samuel 2:12 NAU - "Now the sons of Eli were worthless men; they did not know the LORD"
 God had departed from Israel long before the Philistines took the Ark.
Judges 2:7-10 NAU - "The people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, who had seen all the great work of the LORD which He had done for Israel. ⁸ Then Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of one hundred and ten. ⁹ And they buried him in the territory of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash. ¹⁰ All that generation also were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel."
Judges 21:25 NAU - "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes."
1 Samuel 3:1 NAU - "And word from the LORD was rare in those days, visions were infrequent."
8. The glory of God had departed. When Israel brought the Ark to the front lines in the battle with the Philistines it had lost all meaning. God was not there. This young child Ichabod would always bear testimony to the spiritual bankruptcy of Israel. But praise God for His everlasting mercy.
9. Tonight I want us to consider this dreadful name—Ichabod, the glory has departed. By glory we simply mean His divine presence.
 What would you be without the glory of God?
 What would our church be without the glory of God?

- I. What will happen if God removes His glory from you as an individual?
- A. Every Christian enjoys the abiding presence of God to guide him
1. Jesus is Immanuel—God with us. There is a great peace and comfort in Christ being with us
 2. God’s presence is with us in our every condition
 - a. In poverty and wealth, sickness & health
Matthew 28:20 NAU - "lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."
 - b. The presence of Christ should bring you great comfort
What possible situation on earth can possibly cause you to fear if God is with you?
Psalms 46:1 NAU - "God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. ² Therefore we will not fear,"
 3. The Apostle Paul knew this by experience:
2 Timothy 4:16-17 NAU - "At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them. ¹⁷ But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me . . ."
 4. We go into every battle with the most powerful Defender by our side
We face every decision with our infinitely wise Advocate by our side
Isaiah 43:2 NAU - "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, Nor will the flame burn you."
 5. Matthew Henry: “Those who make the glory of God their end, and the word of God their rule, the Spirit of God the guide of their affections, and the providence of God the guide of their affairs, may be confident that *the Lord goes before them*, as truly as he went before Israel in the wilderness.”
- B. But what if Ichabod comes upon your life? What if the glory of God departs?
1. On one hand God will never leave you or forsake you.
Romans 8:38-39 NAU - "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."
 2. On the other hand, iniquity shall never enjoy fellowship with God.
2 Corinthians 6:14-16 NAU - "what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? ¹⁵ Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? ¹⁶ Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God"
 3. What happens when you grieve the Holy Spirit; when you callously persist in driving Him away.
Ephesians 4:30 NAU - "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."
 4. What happens when a Christian continually takes excursions into the world of sin, laying down his weapons of warfare and ceasing the work of denying the flesh?

5. LBC 5:4 – “The most wise, righteous, and gracious God doth oftentimes leave for a season His own children to manifold temptations and the corruption of their own hearts, to chastise them for their former sins, or to discover unto them the hidden strength of corruption and deceitfulness of their own hearts, that they may be humbled; and to raise them to a more close and constant dependence for their support upon Himself; and to make them more watchful against all future occasions of sin . . .”
6. What will your life look like without the ever-present working of His grace, sanctifying you, and working out of His life in you?
Your heart will grow cold. His Word will grow dry. Prayer will become difficult. You’ll lose the passion for fighting against temptation. The things of the Spiritual life will become stale. Emptiness will set in and joy will disappear. Ichabod will be written upon you—and you may not ever realize it is happening.
John Chrysostom wrote in the 4th century, “To be separated from God is greater punishment than a thousand hells.”
7. Oh how we need His ever-working power at work in us. His abiding presence Christ is our life.
Colossians 1:9-12 NAU - "For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹ strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light."

II. What will happen if God removes His glory from our Church?

- A. How terrible for a church to lose the presence of Christ.
 1. Every blessing upon our church finds its source in Christ. All that we are rests upon Christ.
Ephesians 1:22-23 NAU - " And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, ²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."
 2. As a church we find our being in Him. He is our strength. Without Him we cease to be.
 3. In **Revelation 2** Jesus accused the Church of Ephesus of the sin of allowing their love for Christ to begin to grow cold.
Revelation 2:4 NAU - "But I have this against you, that you have left your first love."
A. His warning was terrifying:
Revelation 2:5 NAU - "Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place-- unless you repent."

- B. The lampstands were the churches enjoying the presence of Christ. It was a picture of a church enjoying the light of His countenance. **Revelation 2:1 NAU** - "The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands"
 - C. To have the lampstand removed is to have the presence of Christ removed. It is to have Ichabod written above the door of the church.
4. In **Rev. 3** the Church of Laodicea was in this horrible condition. They were no longer blessed by the presence of Christ. They were empty, poor, blind, and naked—and they didn't even know it. **Revelation 3:17 NAU** - "Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked"
 5. Sadly, Ichabod has been written upon many churches in our generation. Over 4000 churches closed their doors last year. 88 percent of evangelical children leave the church after they turn eighteen.
- B. How can our church lose the presence of Christ? What could cause the glory of God to depart—for Ichabod to be written upon our church?
When the spirit of Hophni and Phinehas dwells among us.
 1. When Christ ceases to be preached and when you cease to desire it
 2. When the Word of God ceases to be seen as a great treasure to be savored.
 3. When love ceases to prevail among us. When we become hard, critical, censorious, unforgiving.
 4. When gossip can flow and no one cares to stop it.
 5. When sin is given free course and we cease to hunger for righteousness. Instead of fighting against sin we strive to keep up the appearance.
 6. When selfishness replaces the sweet character of servanthood—everyone is looking to satisfy themselves above others.
 7. When our zeal for the things of God becomes cold and is replaced by a passion for the things of this world
 - C. We have to understand, it is almost always true that God removes His glory from churches filled with people who have already lost the sweetness of His presence.

Conclusion:

1. These are fearful things to consider. There is nothing more dreadful than the prospect of God removing the light of His countenance.
William Blaikie – “Tell us that the sun is no longer to shine, tell us that neither dew nor rain shall ever fall again to refresh the earth; tell us that a cruel and savage nation is to reign unchecked and unchallenged over all the families of a people once free and happy; you convey no such image of desolation as when you tell to pious hearts that God has departed from their community.”
2. May we savor His presence, treasure His glory. Nothing is sweeter than a life filled with Christ. Nothing is more bitter than a life without Him.