

Hitherto Hath the LORD Helped Us

I Samuel 7: 1-13

We have read of a difficult and tragic season in the history of Israel. God had provided abundantly for them and yet they had grown complacent and overly confident. Their focus was no longer on the Lord, but on their prosperity. Due to their lack of obedience, God allowed judgment to come.

I fear that our generation is much the same. We have received the blessing of God so long that we have grown complacent and overly confident. We have lost the power of God in the process. That is the one thing that we need in our day, more than anything else. If we are to see revival and a genuine change we must have the power of God in our midst.

Israel found that God was there all the time. He wanted nothing more than to bless them again, but they had to meet His conditions. We too must come to grips with where we are and seek the Lord if we are to enjoy His abundant blessing again. He stands ready to help us, but we must come before Him as Israel did. I want to look at these events concerning Israel as they unfold and make application for our day. I want to preach on the thought found in [V.12 – Hitherto Hath the LORD Helped Us](#).

I. The Glory Departed – To fully understand this passage we must take a quick look at former events that led up to where we are today.

A. The Spiritual Decline (4:2-5, 10-11, 16-21) – Clearly in these verses it is evident that Israel had grown complacent concerning the Lord. They had lived as they pleased and yet when trouble came they assumed that simply having the Ark in their midst would ward off all attacks of the enemy. There was no real submission, just a superficial act of religion. Sadly they were not even aware that the glory had departed.

- How many in our day are living as they were? There is no real desire for the Lord or His ways until trouble comes, and then when it does they believe that a quick rush to the Lord will make everything all right. Few ever comprehend that the glory has departed. They fail to see that their lives and behavior has grieved the Lord and He has removed His presence.

B. The Sovereign Discipline (6:19-20) – This seems harsh, but it reminded the nation of Israel of the holiness of God. He wanted them to see Him as He is, not just as a casual acquaintance that they only looked to in times of desperation. When confronted with the Lord, they realized once again the holiness of God.

- It is dangerous to play games at the foot of the cross. It is dangerous to grow complacent and lose our awe and reverence for the Lord. He is holy and we must regard Him as such.

- I am convinced that one of the greatest hindrances in the modern church is a lack of reverence for the Lord. It is amazing how people can live their lives and come to church pretending that all is well. Be advised, sooner or later you will have to face the consequences of sin!

I. The Glory Departed

II. The Glory Desired (7:1-6) – After suffering under the righteous judgment of God the people desired the Lord to return unto them. They longed for the glory that they once knew. Notice what is involved if we are to experience the glory of God in our lives again.

A. Their Lamentation (2) – *And it came to pass, while the ark abode in Kirjath-jearim, that the time was long; for it was twenty years: and all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord.* Over a period of twenty years the people finally came to the realization that the glory of God had departed. They longed to have His power in their lives again and they began to lament before the Lord. They literally wept and cried because of their spiritual state.

- If we are to experience the power of God in our day, we must get broken of sin. We must come to the place in our spiritual lives that we understand that God is not pleased with the condition of our lives. We must be willing to get on our faces and cry out unto the Lord to touch us and move among us.

B. Their Preparation (3-4) – *And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines. Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the Lord only.* There was some preparation that was necessary for the Lord to move among them again. Life could not remain as it was. Sin had to be realized and confronted.

- The people had embraced the false gods of the Canaanites. They were guilty of worshiping *Baalim and Ashtaroth*. Baal was the prominent idol among the Canaanite nations. He was the god of fertility and weather. His name means lord or master. Ashtaroth was also a goddess of fertility, causing the people to participate in all manner of immorality.
- The same problems continue to affect the world and even the church today. We may not worship the gods of the Canaanites, but many have idols before them just the same. If we allow anything to have preeminence over Christ, it is an idol before Him. Many also allow the pleasures of the flesh to dictate their lives rather than submitting to the will of God.

C. Their Confession (5-6) – And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the Lord. And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the Lord, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the Lord. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh. The people poured out their hearts before the Lord and confessed their sins unto Him.

- We will never experience the glory and power of God in our lives and services until we are willing to get honest before the Lord. It is time for us to pour our hearts out unto the Lord and confess our sins before Him. There must be brokenness over sin.
- Ezra 9:5-6 – And at the evening sacrifice I arose up from my heaviness; and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the Lord my God. And said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens.

I. The Glory Departed

II. The Glory Desired

III. The Glory Displayed (7-13) – I rejoice that the passage doesn't end with verse 6. We serve a God who will hear the cries of a repentant heart. He will reveal His glory if we truly desire it and get right with Him. Let's consider what was involved as the glory was displayed.

A. The Struggle (7-8) – Once the glory had departed, there would be a struggle involved to see it again. This was actually two-fold.

1. Personally (7) – And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines. The enemy of Israel had no desire for them to regain the favor of God. They were determined to resist Israel at all costs. Their opposition struck fear in the hearts of Israel.

- The same is true in our day. The world has no desire for the things of God and would rather that the church never experienced His power. We might as well look for a personal struggle when seeking the Lord.

2. Spiritually (8) – And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines. The people sensed the urgency and desired Samuel to cry out unto the Lord on their behalf and cease not. They were literally asking Samuel to labor in pray for the power of God to come again.

- Experiencing the glory of God in power cannot be achieved without effort. We must be willing to pay the price and seek the Lord. It will be a struggle to secure, but it is well worth the effort. You might as well plan on opposition from the adversary, but we can overcome.
- The modern church needs to learn the value of supplication in our lives as well. We will never have the power of God displayed until we are willing to seek the Lord. We need those who are tired of things as they are to get on their knees and beg God to work in our lives again. We need those who are committed to the cause and will not be deterred. [Jer.29:13 – And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.](#)

B. The Sacrifice (9) – [And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the Lord: and Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel; and the Lord heard him.](#) Receiving the glory will require a sacrifice.

- Samuel offered the sacrifice [wholly unto the Lord](#). He held nothing back; he gave it all unto the Lord.
- Now there is clearly the aspect of worship involved here. The offering was a means of worship for Samuel and the people. If we are to experience the glory again, we must offer our worship.
- The point that we need to understand is that Samuel gave it all unto the Lord. We must get to the place that we are willing to surrender all unto Jesus. We cannot hold back if we are to see the glory in our day. This includes our worship, our walk, everything about us. We don't have the glory in our day because we are unwilling to pay the price and sacrifice for it. We have got to want the Lord and His power more than anything else!

C. The Supremacy (10-11) – [And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel. And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until they came under Beth-car.](#) Isn't that a blessing? The people got right with the Lord and He manifested His presence unto them. The Almighty thundered from heaven and delivered His people.

- May I remind you that we serve the same God today? He is still able to thunder from heaven in our midst. That is what the glory will do. We may be faced with a battle, but God is able to show up and meet our needs.
- I would like to see the Lord do great and mighty things among us once again. I would like to experience His power on that level. There is nothing wrong with wanting more of Jesus! We don't have to live in defeat.

D. The Stone (12) – Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Eben-ezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us. This was done simply as a reminder to the people. The stone had no power or significance other than to stand as a testimony to the power of God. As the people walked past the stone they remembered the glory.

- This wasn't the first time that Israel had erected a stone as a testimony to God. They were instructed of Joshua to set up twelve stones when they passed over the Jordan as a reminder and testimony to the faithfulness of God. It would do us good to be able to set up some stones in our lives. Hard times will come, despair and doubt will soon enough fill our hearts, but if we can see the glory once again and set up a reminder, it will strengthen us when we are weak. Wouldn't it be great to have our children ask what some of these things mean so that we could tell them of the glory and power of the God we serve?

Life is difficult at best. If we've ever needed a move of God, we need it today. I wonder if anyone among us is interested in seeing the glory of God. We can have it, but we must meet the Lord's conditions. Are you willing to pay the price and seek the Lord? If so why not come?