

“Every Knee Shall Bow”
1 Samuel 5
(Preached at Trinity, July 10, 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. In **Chapter 4** we witnessed the great defeat of Israel by the Philistines and the great loss of life. And worst of all, the Ark of God was captured by the Philistines. The Hebrew God was well known by the nations. They had heard about what God did to the Egyptians.
1 Samuel 4:8 NAU - "Woe to us! Who shall deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? These are the gods who smote the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues in the wilderness."
 - A. They knew about how the Canaanites had been defeated by this God. How they must have rejoiced at His defeat.
 - B. This has always been the desire of the nations.
Psalms 2:2-3 NAU - "The kings of the earth take their stand And the rulers take counsel together Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, ³ "Let us tear their fetters apart And cast away their cords from us!"
2. We find nothing of Samuel in these chapters. Surely he must have been dismayed, and yet God protected him during the great slaughter of the Philistines. The Philistines carried the Ark victoriously into Ashdod and placed in the temple of their god, Dagon.
 - A. The next morning Dagon was found fallen and laying on its face. The Philistines assumed some natural reason for this event. Their response was to simply return their god to its place.
 - B. The next morning, however, their god was again on the ground—only this time the head and hands had been cut off. Only the torso remained. We should take note that on each morning they found the Ark undisturbed.
3. Next, the people of Ashdod began to contract terrible tumors.
 - A. The exact meaning of these tumors isn’t clear. And there is a textual variant in the Hebrew text. In the Hebrew Bible the Scribes would not alter any text they felt had been copied inaccurately. Instead they made a note in the margin. The written variation in the text is called the ketiv. The marginal note is called the qere.
 - B. The KJV or Authorized Version followed the qere. Most modern texts follow the ketiv. Thus the KJV translates the word “emrod” which can mean hemorrhoids. Most other translations translate it “tumor” but we have no further meaning. Perhaps it was something as fearful and deadly as the bubonic plague. There’s a connection to rats in **Chapter 6**

4. The lords of the Philistines began to see the connection between the Ark being brought into the city and these unexplained event taking place, but they were not convinced. Perhaps it was just a coincidence. But just to make sure they moved the Ark to the city of Gath. Suddenly, however, this city too was stricken with the tumors.
5. There was terrible confusion throughout the city of Gath. We should understand this confusion as a terrible turmoil. God removed all of the peace of restraining grace resulting in mayhem. The city began to turn against itself. And they too began to contract the terrible tumors. Apparently the mortality in the city was high but it's not clear if more people died from the mayhem or the tumors.
6. So the Ark was removed and sent to Ekron. The people of Ekron no doubt knew the great danger that was being brought to their city. They cried out:
1 Samuel 5:10 NAU - "They have brought the ark of the God of Israel around to us, to kill us and our people."
 - A. They cried out in fear but they did not cry out in humble submission. This is what lost people do in the presence of God. Most are convinced of His mighty power but they are not willing to bow before Him and worship Him.
 - B. A great panic occurred in the city and many died in the confusion. And they too began to suffer with the tumors.
 - C. Each town the Ark is brought to suffered worse than the previous. This is always the condition of sin. God's wrath increases. Hell will be the final great display of God's anger upon sin. People today are storing up God's wrath.
Romans 2:5 ESV - "But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed."
7. The Philistines are alive and well in our day. They continue to set up their idols and boast of the defeat of God. Let me share with you some important points to remember.
 - I. The first thing we need to see here is the futility of seeking to defeat God.
 - A. The Philistines thought they had taken God captive
 1. Israel lamented the loss of the Ark to the Philistines. But they were in sorrow over the superstitious loss of its power. And they saw the loss of the loss of the Ark to the Philistines as the terrible defeat of God.
 2. While Israel was in great lamentation, the Philistines were ecstatic over their great victory. They had taken the powerful Hebrew God captive. But their victory would be short-lived.
Hebrews 10:31 NAU - "It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God."
 3. The Philistines found themselves helpless before the mighty hand of God. City after city discovered it's a dangerous thing to toy with God. It is a dangerous thing to have Him in your midst and not worship Him.
 - B. Men still foolishly try to defeat God
 1. Evolution seeks to destroy God as Creator. It's a lie that was popularized in Charles Darwin's book, *On the Origin of the Species*, published in 1859. It is still embraced by those who hold tenaciously to the religion of Darwinism. Although most can honestly see the weaknesses of evolution they will never admit the existence of an Almighty Creator.

2. They use their interpretation of the First Amendment to ban God from all public life. The modern Philistines cheer that God has been defeated and put in a cage.
3. Law after law is passed to deny God's right to govern man.
 - a. A woman has the right to decide if the baby in her womb is a living human being. She sets herself up as the ultimate determiner of life.
 - b. God sets the parameters around human sexuality but modern Philistines have outlawed God's standards. A man can decide to marry another man – he makes his own moral determination.
 - c. God confines sexuality activity to the marriage bed but modern man has exiled God's standards. Cohabitation is now socially acceptable.

Hebrews 13:4 NAU - "Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge."

4. And the modern Philistines are as proud of their idols as the ancient Philistines were of Dagon.
They set their idols up to be worshipped and adored. Gods of materialism, pleasure and ever sensual desire.
5. These foolish souls will find no more success in defeating God than did the Philistines in Samuel's day.

II. The second thing we need to see is every knee will bow before Him

A. The scene of Dagon is striking

1. The first night he was toppled from his lofty perch – he fell on his face. From the viewpoint of the Philistines the defeated God of Israel was placed before the superior God, Dagon. The next morning Dagon was bowing before Yahweh. The Philistines had to stand their god back up.
2. The second night was more significant – his hands and head were broken off. The head is the center of thought and reason; the hands symbolize action—the things we do. Dagon was powerless

Psalms 115:4-7 NAU - "Their idols are silver and gold, The work of man's hands. ⁵ They have mouths, but they cannot speak; They have eyes, but they cannot see; ⁶ They have ears, but they cannot hear; They have noses, but they cannot smell; ⁷ They have hands, but they cannot feel; They have feet, but they cannot walk; They cannot make a sound with their throat."

3. God's almighty power cannot be resisted. All will bow before Him.
 - a. Sometimes His power is displayed with vivid terror
Genesis 19:24 - "Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven"
Numbers 16:31-33 NAU - "As he finished speaking all these words, the ground that was under them split open; ³² and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, and their households, and all the men who belonged to Korah with *their* possessions. ³³ So they and all that belonged to them went down alive to Sheol"

- b. Sometimes God works much more subtly. His actions were so subtle at first they didn't suspect His actions. Dagon was on the ground and the Ark simply rested in its place. But Dagon was bowing before the living God. And what did the Philistines do. They put Dagon back in his place.
 - c. What they failed to realize is they were about to experience the fearful hand of God.
 - 4. What followed next was the fearful judgment of God upon the cities of the Philistines, Ashdod, Gath, and Ekron. God plagued them with tumors and deadly confusion and they turned against one another.
 - a. Ashdod thought it might be an isolated occurrence and so sent the Ark to Gath. They discovered this was no isolated event but the judgment of the living God.
 - b. We must look upon this carefully. It was no isolated event. God still looks upon idolatry the same way and His anger is still kindled against it.
- B. God will never allow idolatry
- 1. This was no isolated event upon the Philistines. It was the Divine wrath of God upon the idolatry of men. He will never allow idolatry.
 - 2. He alone must be worshipped.
 - Exodus 20:3 KJV** - "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."
 - Isaiah 42:8 NAU** - "I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, Nor My praise to graven images."
 - 3. If this was no isolated event upon the Philistines should our land not rise up and take notice?
 - a. God afflicted the Philistines with tumors. They tried to dismiss the source. They tried to dismiss God's displeasure.
 - b. The AIDS virus is a hot topic but one thing persists. Almost no one sees it as God's judgment upon homosexuality even though sexual promiscuity remains the chief means of contracting the disease. How politically incorrect to suggest it might be God's displeasure upon our own idolatry.
 - c. God also afflicted the Philistines with deadly confusion. How heavy God's hand is upon our generation. What confusion has come upon our land. Even our political process is marked by a terrible confusion. And cities burn at the slightest provocation.
- C. And notice the power against the idolatry was God.
- 1. It wasn't the Israelites who marched in and tore down the image of Dagon. It was by the power of God. Idols cannot stand before the power of God.
 - 2. The idols of this world do not fall by the power of men. The fall of Dagon was a grand demonstration of God's sovereign power and authority.
 - 3. The reason the church is so powerless today is the same reason Israel was powerless against the Philistines. It isn't because the enemy is so powerful. It is because we are estranged from God.

4. The reason the church is in decline today isn't because our culture has turned against religion and has become more secular. It is because we've lost confidence in the Gospel.
Romans 1:16 NAU - "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."
5. How do we tear down the Philistine idols of our day? Only by the power of God and His Word.
 - a. How do men overcome the idol of pornography? Do we give up in defeat? Do we simply declare the temptation is too strong?
 - b. No we need to understand the source of our power and turn to God and the power of His Word and prayer. We can discover His greatness and glory far exceeds the fantasies we find on the internet. We can get on our knees and ask Him to cleanse us from this sin and make us holy.
 - c. Richard Philips reminds us: "A Christian man who is walking close to the Lord, whose active faith is empowered by the Holy Spirit through God's Word and Prayer, and who is participating in a supportive community with other believers is not easily overcome by seductive pictures of naked women."

Conclusion:

1. What do we take away from this account of God's defeat of the Philistine idols? We need to see that God has absolute dominion in this world. Dominion over every heart.
2. We need to understand that every knee will bow before the majesty and glory of God. It may not happen in this life. Fallen humanity holds God at a distance. The modern Philistines still pretend that God is defeated. They've gotten away with their attacks upon His rule—but only temporarily.
3. But they have not won.
 - a. First of all every idol will be destroyed.
2 Peter 3:10 NAU - "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up."
 - b. Second, the Day of Judgment will be a day of reckoning. Every knee will bow before the majesty of Christ. Not voluntarily, just like the image of Dagon.
Philippians 2:9-11 NAU - "God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."
4. You cannot win if you are in warfare against God. It may appear that you've gotten away with it but God will not allow anything to usurp Him. He is jealous of that which is intrinsically His alone. He is infinitely glorious. He must be worshipped.
5. But oh how glorious it is to see Him in the splendor of His majesty and bow before Him. May God grant us to see Him as more and more glorious.