

“Fear in Faith”  
1 Samuel 7:7-17  
(Preached at Trinity, August 28, 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 saw Israel experiencing a terrible catastrophe. They were defeated by the Philistines and the unthinkable occurred—the Ark of the Covenant was taken captive. **1 Samuel 4:10-11 NAU** - "So the Philistines fought and Israel was defeated, and every man fled to his tent; and the slaughter was very great, for there fell of Israel thirty thousand foot soldiers. <sup>11</sup> And the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died."
2. In **Chapters 5-6** we witness numerous examples of what happens when God is not treated as holy.
  - A. Three cities of the Philistines suffered greatly under the wrath of God and many lost their lives. They sent the Ark from city to city until after seven months they sent it back to Israel with good riddance.
  - B. After the Ark entered Beth-shemesh there was great joy. **1 Samuel 6:13 NAU** - "Now the people of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley, and they raised their eyes and saw the ark and were glad to see it."  
But they too experienced the wrath of God because they did not treat God as holy. The text tells us they set the Ark upon a stone in public display and either looked into it or gazed upon it without holy reverence. Great judgment came upon the city and, like the Philistines, they quickly sent it away.
3. The point in all of this is God must be treated as holy. All must bow before Him in holy reverence. **Leviticus 10:3 NAU** - "By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, And before all the people I will be honored."
4. Finally, as we entered **Chapter 7** twenty years have passed and Samuel calls upon Israel to repent of their woeful disrespect of God and finally they repent. **1 Samuel 7:4-6 NAU** - "So the sons of Israel removed the Baals and the Ashtaroath and served the LORD alone. <sup>5</sup> Then Samuel said, "Gather all Israel to Mizpah and I will pray to the LORD for you." <sup>6</sup> They gathered to Mizpah, and drew water and poured it out before the LORD, and fasted on that day and said there, "We have sinned against the LORD."
5. Almost immediately after their repentance their faith was put to the test. They were attacked by the Philistines. God never tempts us to sin, but He will often put our faith on trial. **1 Peter 1:6-7 NAU** - "you have been distressed by various trials, <sup>7</sup> so that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ"

6. The people of Israel received news that the Philistines were preparing for battle against Israel.  
**1 Samuel 7:7 NAU** - "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."  
 A. Americans have seldom known the terror of battle on our own soil. We knew it well during the Civil War. It must have been terrifying to hear the armies approaching and the sound of gunfire just beyond the trees.  
 B. I felt this uneasy sense as crowds gathered for protest against the police department just down the street from my home.  
 C. The thought of the skilled army of the Philistines marching toward the Israelite cities sent terror throughout the people of Israel.
7. This isn't the first time Israel faced the Philistines. The previous battle of **Chapter 4** was still in their memory. What we have to notice in our present passage is how they responded to their fear in contrast to previous assault by the Philistines.  
 A. In **Chapter 4** the Philistines attacked and Israel did not seek God in prayer. They did not turn to Samuel for a word from God. Instead, they vainly sent for the Ark to be their defense. The results were devastating.  
 B. But now Israel faces their fear by turning to God. They understand their most powerful weapon is prayer.  
**1 Samuel 7:8 NAU** - "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."
8. Overcoming fear is one of the great struggles of our life. We have faith, and yet we fear. God's continual charge to His people is, "Do not be afraid."  
 God told Abraham  
**Genesis 15:1 NAU** - "After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great."  
 This is also the word used to describe the holy fear and reverence we owe to God.  
**Deuteronomy 31:12 NAU** - "Assemble the people, the men and the women and children and the alien who is in your town, so that they may hear and learn and fear the LORD your God, and be careful to observe all the words of this law."
10. Tonight I want us to consider this issue of fear. I title this sermon, "Fear in Faith." In other words, how do we who trust Christ manage our fear?

- I. First of all, we need to understand the reality of the problem
- A. Human beings are characterized by fear
1. The word for “afraid” is a very common Hebrew word - **פָּחַד** – 314 times in the OT. It strikes at the very heart of the condition of fallen humanity. The first time we find it is immediately after Adam fell.  
**Genesis 3:10 NAU** - "He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself."
  2. Much of what we do as fallen human beings is the result of fear
    - a. Anger is often the result of fear – fear of not being in control. Fear of having our position challenged.
    - b. Worry and anxiety are the result of fear.
    - c. Our spending and our saving patterns are often motivated by fear – fear of the unknown fear of the future.
    - d. The same is true with our desire for insurance. We fear to face the possibility of loss. (This doesn't mean insurance is bad – it is good to plan for the future. But are we motivated by fear?)
- B. We need to embrace the reality that most fear is sin
1. I say “most” because God has place certain fear responses as a means of self-preservation. The call it the fight or flight response. It is our response to attack. A wild animal jumps out of the woods at you and this fear response boosts adrenalin enabling us to respond by fighting or fleeing.
  2. But most often fear is the result of unbelief  
Calvin said of fear –  
"The consequence is that when dangers arise, they are terrified and confounded, and attribute far more to the ability of mortal man in attacking than to the power of God in defending."
  3. Fear is a distrust of God. It calls into question His intentions. It doubts His provision. It despises His purposes.  
This was the response of the disciples when they faced the storm  
**Mark 4:36-40 NAU** - "Leaving the crowd, they took Him along with them in the boat, just as He was; and other boats were with Him. <sup>37</sup> And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up. <sup>38</sup> Jesus Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" <sup>39</sup> And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Hush, be still." And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm. <sup>40</sup> And He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?"
  4. Fear reveals our lack of love for God. Can we truly love the God we do not trust?
    - a. Can we truly love the God that we question His intentions and doubt His provision?  
**1 John 4:18 NAU** - "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear"
    - b. Fear is always caused by attention upon self  
If our first love is our own self, then our first concern is our own welfare

- C. Like all sin, fear must be repented of.
1. We need to see our fears in light of the Gospel
  2. Before God saved us we were His enemies. We were transgressors of the Law and the Law condemned us.
  3. We had no claim upon the blessings of God and were without hope in this world. The Scripture declares God's anger upon the wicked.
  4. The Gospel changes everything.
    - a. We are no longer the enemies of God but His dear children. Jesus Christ has fulfilled the demands of the Law and God looks upon our weakness with pity.
    - b. God looks upon us with delight. All of His plans and purposes regarding us are only good.
    - c. God loves us with a love that is beyond our comprehension.
  5. When we find ourselves in fear we need to pray, "Oh God, forgive my doubts of Your tender care. Forgive my mistrust of Your mighty power. Help me to trust in You completely."

II. Look at the response of Israel to this pending attack by the Philistines

- A. They turned to God in prayer
- 1 Samuel 7:8 NAU** - "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."
1. Samuel stood as their mediator. He was God's instrument for speaking to the people. **Chapters 4-6** have been void of the presence of Samuel. There was no interest in hearing from God. Finally, Israel was seeking the face of God. **1 Samuel 7:9 NAU** - "and Samuel cried to the LORD for Israel"
  2. This happened on the heels of their repentance in **Verse 6**  
**1 Samuel 7:6 NAU** - "They gathered to Mizpah, and drew water and poured it out before the LORD, and fasted on that day and said there, "We have sinned against the LORD."
- B. Our response to fear must always be prayer
1. Prayer brings peace to our hearts and minds  
**Philippians 4:6-7 NAU** - "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."
  2. As we pray for deliverance we also pray that God might increase our faith  
**Mark 9:23-24 NAU** - "All things are possible to him who believes."  
<sup>24</sup> Immediately the boy's father cried out and said, "I do believe; help my unbelief."
  - c. Pray that God might help you love Him more  
**Romans 5:5 NAU** - "hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us."  
**1 John 4:18 NAU** - "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love."

### III. God's response to their prayer

#### A. He heard their prayer and came to their defense

**1 Samuel 7:9 NAU** - "Samuel cried to the LORD for Israel and the LORD answered him."

1. God displayed His mighty power before the Philistines—and before Israel  
**1 Samuel 7:10 NAU** - "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."

- a. Some hold that this was a natural occurrence from the hand of God—a severe thunderstorm. This is possible as God often works through the normal use of means.
- b. On the other hand, this would have been a thunderstorm like none other. They were so affected by the thunder that they were thrown into confusion and routed before Israel.

2. What a contrast to **Chapter 4**

**1 Samuel 4:10-11 NAU** - "So the Philistines fought and Israel was defeated, and every man fled to his tent; and the slaughter was very great, for there fell of Israel thirty thousand foot soldiers. <sup>11</sup> And the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died."

- a. All they had was the superstitious reliance on the figure of the Ark. There was no prayer and no reliance upon God. There really wasn't any indication that they were afraid, although they surely should have been. We simply read that they blindly marched forth in presumption.
- b. Now they had the reality of God's almighty power to defend them
- c. Notice, the initial assault did not involve Israel at all  
**1 Samuel 7:10 NAU** - "But the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day against the Philistines and confused them, so that they were routed before Israel."
- d. William Blaikie – "The battle with the Philistines had already been fought by Samuel in his knees. There can be no more sure token of success than this. If we are victorious there we need have little fear of victory in the other battle."<sup>1</sup>

#### B. God has always made it clear to His people that though there are battles to be fought He would go with them and fight on their behalf

**Deuteronomy 20:1 NAU** - "When you go out to battle against your enemies and see horses and chariots *and* people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; for the LORD your God, who brought you up from the land of Egypt, is with you."

1. This was David's great confidence

**Psalms 56:3-4 NAU** - "When I am afraid, I will put my trust in You. <sup>4</sup> In God, whose word I praise, In God I have put my trust; I shall not be afraid. What can mere man do to me?"

---

<sup>1</sup> Blaikie, William Garden. (2005). *Expository Lectures on the Book of 1 Samuel* (p. 97). Birmingham: Solid Ground Christian Books.

**Psalm 91:1-5 NAU** - "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High Will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. <sup>2</sup> I will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress, My God, in whom I trust!" <sup>3</sup> For it is He who delivers you from the snare of the trapper And from the deadly pestilence. <sup>4</sup> He will cover you with His pinions, And under His wings you may seek refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark. <sup>5</sup> You will not be afraid of the terror by night, Or of the arrow that flies by day;"

2. This is our great confidence as well. Some of our battles are spiritual. Others are from the hands of men. God defends us through both.

**Ephesians 6:10 NAU** - "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might."

#### Conclusion:

1. Just like with Israel, sometimes it takes a great trial to bring us to cry out to God and trust Him and by faith look to Him for deliverance. Too often we become content in our own self-sufficiency. God brings us to the end of our reliance upon the wisdom of this world.
2. It is essential that we recognize our weakness and humble ourselves before God.  
**2 Corinthians 12:9-10 NAU** - "And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. <sup>10</sup> Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong."
3. Dale Ralph Davis – "Sometimes the Father may box us in, place us in a situation in which, one by one, all our secondary helps and supports are taken from us, in order that, defenseless, we may lean on his mercy alone. More and more God's people must walk the way of desperation—prayer. Once we see this, we will no longer regard prayer as a pious cop-out but as our only rational activity."<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Davis, D. R. (2000). *1 Samuel: Looking on the Heart* (p. 76). Scotland: Christian Focus Publications.