

“If You Repent”
1 Samuel 7:3-6
(Preached at Trinity, August 21, 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. ¹¹ 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. Great judgment came upon the city and 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. The people of Beth-shemesh asked the all-important question: **1 Samuel 6:20 NAU** - "Who is able to stand before the LORD, this holy God? And to whom shall He go up from us?"
5. The answer involved the most unlikely people. It didn’t go to a priestly city. Beth-shemesh was a priestly city, yet they did not treat God as holy. Instead, the Ark was sent to Kiriath-jearim. They immediately came and took the Ark and placed it in a house on a hill where it remained for 20 years.
6. In all of these events there is a huge absence that we must not miss. Nowhere is Samuel mentioned. The last we heard anything about Samuel is the beginning of **Chapter 4** which most likely should be the conclusion of **Chapter 3**: **1 Samuel 3:21-4:1 NAU** - "And the LORD appeared again at Shiloh, because the LORD revealed Himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the LORD. (4:1) Thus the word of Samuel came to all Israel."
7. There is no indication Samuel had anything to do with the decision to march the Ark into battle with the Philistines.

8. After Beth-shemesh suffered under the hand of God they sent the Ark to Kiriath-jearim, a city of the inheritance of Judah, but the dwelling place of the Gibeonites. There it rested for 20 years. Most likely, even though Samuel is not mentioned, he had been faithfully serving as God's spokesman to Israel.

1 Samuel 4:1 NAU - "Thus the word of Samuel came to all Israel."

- A. He would have preached the necessity of holiness and commanding Israel to put away their idols. Largely, his preaching fell upon deaf ears.
- B. At some point, however, during the long 20 years Israel began to feel the weightiness of God's displeasure and His absence among the sons of Israel.

1 Samuel 7:2 - "and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD."

9. For the first time since **Chapter 3** the text records the voice of Samuel.

1 Samuel 7:3 NAU - "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."

10. Samuel's charge was a simple statement of the First Commandment. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." God will tolerate no rivals. He will be worshipped and He will be worshipped alone.

11. This was no small demand. Samuel is commanding them to put away their false gods. The worship of God was different from the pagan worship. The worship of Yahweh has always been simplistic. He is holy and commands our praise and worship with simplicity. God gives strict precepts on how He must be worshipped. This is at the heart of the Second Commandment.

Spurgeon's Catechism

Question 46: What is forbidden in the second commandment?

Answer: The second commandment forbids the worshipping of God by images, or any other way not appointed in His word.

- A. The essence of this commandment is the exclusion of all modes of worship that God has not prescribed.
1. This was the issue with the golden calf in the wilderness. They wanted to worship God through this golden image.
 2. This was also one of the reasons God would not allow Israel to approach Mount Sinai. Matthew Henry writes – "They were not allowed to gratify their vain curiosity. They might see, but not gaze. Some of them, probably, were desirous to see some similitude that they might know how to make an image of God, which he took care to prevent, for they *saw no manner of similitude.*"
 3. The worship of God places total focus upon Him. But this isn't satisfying to the flesh.
- B. The worship of the foreign gods, on the other hand, was flamboyant. It was lively and it was attractive to the flesh. We find some of the same issues in modern contemporary worship. William Blaikie - "Between Hebrew and heathen worship, there was something of the contrast that you find between the severe simplicity of a Puritan meeting and the gorgeous and fashionable splendour of a great Romish ceremonial. To put away Baalim and Ashtaroath was to abjure what was fashionable and agreeable, and fall back on what was unattractive and somber."

11. Israel had begun to treat God as the heathen treated their gods. He was an object to appeal to in time of need, and little more. Samuel was commanding them to repent.
1 Samuel 7:3 NAU - "If you return to the LORD with all your heart"
 The word for return is **נָשׁוּב** which is one of the two Hebrew words translated "repent"
Ezekiel 14:6 NAU - "Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Repent and turn away from your idols and turn your faces away from all your abominations."
12. And Israel repented. Tonight I want to set before you the characteristics of their repentance which is the nature of true repentance.
- I. Repentance begins with confession – the acknowledgement of sin
- A. The children of Israel confessed their sin
1 Samuel 7:6 NAU - "We have sinned against the LORD."
 1. This was not their heart when they carried the Ark into battle. It was not their heart at Beth-shemesh when they sent the Ark from their borders. But now after many years they confessed their sin.
 2. They confessed that their sin was against God. This is the nature of all sin. It is all treason against God.
 3. This was the nature of David's repentance
Psalms 51:3-4 NAU - "For I know my transgressions, And my sin is ever before me. ⁴ Against You, You only, I have sinned And done what is evil in Your sight"
- B. The problem with a man lost in his blindness is that he fails to see himself as wicked and worthy of God's condemnation.
 1. He makes excuses for his actions. He measures himself by the behavior of others and considers himself a pretty good person.
 2. Jesus made it clear that He came not for those who see themselves as good, but for those who see themselves as wretched sinners
Mark 2:17 NAU - "Jesus said to them, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."
 3. Repentance begins with owning our sin and guilt
- II. True repentance demands true sorrow for sin
- A. Israel turned their hearts towards God in sorrow
1 Samuel 7:2 NAU - "and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD."
 1. The word for "lamented" literally means to wail.
 2. God had to do a work in their hearts before they felt true remorse. They were sorry to have offended God. But they were also sorry for the loss of His divine presence.
- B. True repentance fills our heart with bitter grief
 1. It has an effect upon our entire being
Psalms 31:9-10 NAU - "Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress; My eye is wasted away from grief, my soul and my body also. ¹⁰ For my life is spent with sorrow And my years with sighing; My strength has failed because of my iniquity, And my body has wasted away."

2. This sorrow is a work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. We are filled with sorrow because we have offended the God who has been so good and merciful to us. But we also lament the loss of His divine presence; of His favor towards us; of His fellowship.
3. This sorrow creates in us a great sense of shame
 - a. The sinner feels degraded – not just because his sin has been detected but because he has forsaken God.
A thief may feel remorse when caught but it is a selfish shame
 - b. True repentance brings shame because of our wrong doing against God; because we had sought to keep God completely out of our life. This was the heart of the people of Beth-shemesh. They ordered God out of their city.
1 Samuel 6:21 NAU - "So they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kiriath-jearim, saying, "The Philistines have brought back the ark of the LORD; come down and take it up to you."
4. Israel entered into fasting as a sign of their contrition
1 Samuel 7:5-6 NAU - "Then Samuel said, "Gather all Israel to Mizpah and I will pray to the LORD for you." ⁶ 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. Repentance demands feeling sorry for our sin but it demands more. You can be sorry and not be changed. Repentance demands turning *from* our sin.

III. True repentance demands turning *from* sin and *to* God

- A. Samuel commanded Israel to put away their sin and return to God
1 Samuel 7:3 NAU - "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
1 Samuel 7:4 NAU - "So the sons of Israel removed the Baals and the Ashtaroath and served the LORD alone."
 1. As difficult as it was, Israel was willing to put away their idols and turn to God alone
 2. True repentance demands forsaking sin and turning to God
 3. It has been referred to as a U-turn or an about-face.
 4. We find the same thing commanded by the Prophet Isaiah
Isaiah 55:7 NAU - "Let the wicked forsake his way And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the LORD, And He will have compassion on him, And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon."
- B. Turning to God means bowing before Him as King – as Lord of Lords
 1. It means laying down our weapons of war and entering into peace with God
 2. It means desiring to come under His dominion, His Law
 3. Christian repentance demands having everything else in our life fall behind the priority of Christ
Luke 14:26 NAU - "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple."

Conclusion:

1. Repentance has always been God's demand for restoration from sin.
Repentance is absolutely essential for salvation
Peter preached:
Acts 3:19 NAU - "Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord;"
Acts 2:37-38 NAU - "Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"³⁸
Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."
2. True repentance is the result of a change of heart.
1 Samuel 7:3 NAU - "If you return to the LORD with all your heart"
3. True repentance is a continuing reality in our life. There is the initial repentance unto life which is the hating, detesting, and forsaking of all sin. But there must be the continual forsaking of the sin. Israel could no longer return to their foreign gods
4. Private sin demands private confession and repentance. But Israel sinned as a people and public repentance was necessary. They met together in assembly and poured out their hearts together. At times it is necessary that churches repent.
Our Lord's word to the Church of Ephesus
Revelation 2:4-5 NAU - "But I have this against you, that you have left your first love.⁵ '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."
We must maintain purity as individuals. We must also maintain purity as a church.