**1 Samuel 7 — The Power Of Repentance**

February 27, 2022

Most people are beaten down enough by life. They already feel guilty enough.… I want them to come to Lakewood or our meetings and be lifted up, to say, “You know what? I may not be perfect, but I’m moving forward. I’m doing better.   
—Joel Olsteen, CBS Sunday Morning Interview

People are used to [churches] condemning people to make them feel bad so that they’ll repent, so they’ll know that they’re sinners, but I think there’s a different approach.   
—Joel Osteen

Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Matthew 3:2 (ESV)

Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. Matthew 3:8 (ESV)

No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Luke 13:5 (ESV)

And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Acts 2:38 (ESV)

1. Background

And the men of Kiriath-jearim came and took up the ark of the LORD and brought it to the house of Abinadab on the hill. And they consecrated his son Eleazar to have charge of the ark of the LORD. From the day that the ark was lodged at Kiriath-jearim, a long time passed, some twenty years, and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD.   
1 Samuel 7:1–2 (ESV)

* Even when there is faithful preaching of God’s Word, sometimes there is little response to God’s Word because people refuse to listen.
* Don’t give up preaching the gospel. Sometimes repentance only comes after a long time.

1. The Gospel According To Samuel

And Samuel said to all the house of Israel, “If you are returning to the LORD with all your heart, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth from among you and direct your heart to the LORD and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.” So the people of Israel put away the Baals and the Ashtaroth, and they served the LORD only. 1 Samuel 7:3–4 (ESV)

1. Return to the Lord with all your heart.

And Samuel said to all the house of Israel, “If you are returning to the LORD with all your heart,…” 1 Samuel 7:3 (ESV)

For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. 2 Corinthians 7:10 (ESV)

* + - * + Don’t confuse worldly grief with godly grief.

1. Put away foreign gods.

…then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth from among you…   
1 Samuel 7:3 (ESV)

You shall have no other gods before me. Exodus 20:3 (ESV)

* 1. Baal and Ashtaroth worship were popular.

You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. James 4:4 (ESV)

* + - * + Turn away from what is popular but sinful in the world around us.
  1. Baal and Ashtaroth worship were sensually appealing.

Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. Hebrews 13:4 (ESV)

* + - * + Turn away from sexual sin.

1. Direct your heart to the Lord and serve him only.

…direct your heart to the LORD and serve him only… 1 Samuel 7:3c (ESV)

1. God will deliver you.

…and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.” 1 Samuel 7:3 (ESV)

So the people of Israel put away the Baals and the Ashtaroth, and they served the LORD only. 1 Samuel 7:4 (ESV)

1. Samuel gathered the people and prayed for the people.

Then Samuel said, “Gather all Israel at Mizpah, and I will pray to the LORD for you.”   
1 Samuel 7:5 (ESV)

So they gathered at 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.”…   
1 Samuel 7:6 (ESV)

1. Samuel judged Israel.

…And Samuel judged the people of Israel at Mizpah. 1 Samuel 7:6 (ESV)

Now when the Philistines heard that the people of Israel had gathered at Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel… 1 Samuel 7:7 (ESV)

…And when the people of Israel heard of it, they were afraid of the Philistines.   
1 Samuel 7:7 (ESV)

And the people of Israel said to Samuel, “Do not cease to cry out to the LORD our God for us, that he may save us from the hand of the Philistines.” So Samuel took a nursing lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the LORD. And Samuel cried out to the LORD for Israel, and the LORD answered him. 1 Samuel 7:8–9 (ESV)

* The most important way to prepare for the battles of life is to be in a right relationship with God.

1. The Lord answered Samuel.

…and the Lord answered him. 1 Samuel 7:9c

As Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to attack Israel… 1 Samuel 7:10 (ESV)

…But the LORD thundered with a mighty sound that day against the Philistines and threw them into confusion, and they were defeated before Israel. 1 Samuel 7:10 (ESV)

The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; against them he will thunder in heaven… 1 Samuel 2:10 (ESV)

And the men of Israel went out from Mizpah and pursued the Philistines and struck them, as far as below Beth-car. 1 Samuel 7:11 (ESV)

1. Don’t forget when God rescued us.

Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen and called its name Ebenezer; for he said, “Till now the LORD has helped us.” 1 Samuel 7:12 (ESV)

* We are not a people who live in the past. We live out of the past.

1. God protected His people after repentance.

So the Philistines were subdued and did not again enter the territory of Israel. And the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. The cities that the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron to Gath, and Israel delivered their territory from the hand of the Philistines. There was peace also between Israel and the Amorites. 1 Samuel 7:13–14 (ESV)

* God honors those who honor Him.

1. God sustains His people with repentance.

Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. And he went on a circuit year by year to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah. And he judged Israel in all these places. Then he would return to Ramah, for his home was there, and there also he judged Israel. And he built there an altar to the LORD. 1 Samuel 7:15–17 (ESV)

Application

* Repentance to God through Jesus is essential for receiving God’s forgiveness and favor.

Life Group Questions

1. What did you learn in this week’s lesson that you did not know? What questions do you have?
2. Repentance is the key to understanding 1 Samuel 7. What are the components of genuine repentance? Why are all of them necessary?
3. How often do you examine your life for sin, repent of it and call out to Jesus asking for forgiveness?
4. What does this chapter teach us about the kind of leader God’s people need?
5. Why are confession and repentance essential for revival in the church?
6. Samuel called Israel to repent of their national sins at Mizpah. Do you think churches can be guilty of corporate sin? How does a church repent of corporate sin? If you were to analyze CrossWinds, what do you think might be our greatest corporate sin. Read Revelation 2:1-7, 12-17, 18-23, 3:14-22.
7. Read 1 Samuel 7:3-4. The people of Israel adopted the sinful practices of the culture around them. What are the sinful aspects of our culture that many Christians find themselves adopting of which they might need to repent?
8. What does the Bible teach us about fasting and when it might be appropriate? This is why the priests of Dagon and all who enter the house of Dagon do not tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day. 1 Samuel 5:5 (ESV)

* Sometimes when people see evidence of God, they will stubbornly refuse to repent and believe in God.

1. God’s Heavy Hand On The Philistines

The hand of the Lord was heavy against the people of Ashdod, and he terrified and afflicted them with tumors, both Ashdod and its territory. 1 Samuel 5:6 (ESV)

And when the men of Ashdod saw how things were, they said, “The ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us, for his hand is hard against us and against Dagon our god.” 1 Samuel 5:7 (ESV)

So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines and said, “What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?” They answered, “Let the ark of the God of Israel be brought around to Gath.” So they brought the ark of the God of Israel there.   
1 Samuel 5:8 (ESV)

But after they had brought it around, the hand of the LORD was against the city, causing a very great panic, and he afflicted the men of the city, both young and old, so that tumors broke out on them. 1 Samuel 5:9 (ESV)

So they sent the ark of God to Ekron. But as soon as the ark of God came to Ekron, the people of Ekron cried out, “They have brought around to us the ark of the God of Israel to kill us and our people.” 1 Samuel 5:10 (ESV)

They sent therefore and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines and said, “Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it return to its own place, that it may not kill us and our people.” For there was a deathly panic throughout the whole city. The hand of God was very heavy there. 1 Samuel 5:11 (ESV)

The men who did not die were struck with tumors, and the cry of the city went up to heaven. 1 Samuel 5:12 (ESV)

3. The Return Of The Ark

The ark of the LORD was in the country of the Philistines seven months.   
1 Samuel 6:1 (ESV)

And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners and said, “What shall we do with the ark of the LORD? Tell us with what we shall send it to its place.”   
1 Samuel 6:2 (ESV)

They said, “If you send away the ark of the God of Israel, do not send it empty, but by all means return him a guilt offering. Then you will be healed, and it will be known to you why his hand does not turn away from you.” 1 Samuel 6:3 (ESV)

* + The freeing of the ark from the Philistines is similar to the freeing of God’s people from Egypt.
    1. The phrase, “send away” are the same Hebrew words used by Moses when he said, “Let my people go!”
    2. The Israelites did not leave Egypt empty but were given gold. The ark did not leave the Philistines empty, but with gold.

And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and when you go, you shall not go empty, but each woman shall ask of her neighbor, and any woman who lives in her house, for silver and gold jewelry, and for clothing… Exodus 3:21–22 (ESV)

And they said, “What is the guilt offering that we shall return to him?” They answered, “Five golden tumors and five golden mice, according to the number of the lords of the Philistines, for the same plague was on all of you and on your lords. So you must make images of your tumors and images of your mice that ravage the land, and give glory to the God of Israel. Perhaps he will lighten his hand from off you and your gods and your land. 1 Samuel 6:4–5 (ESV)

Why should you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? After he had dealt severely with them, did they not send the people away, and they departed? 1 Samuel 6:6 (ESV)

* When God is trying to get our attention in life, don’t be hard-hearted and ignore Him.

Now then, take and prepare a new cart and two milk cows on which there has never come a yoke, and yoke the cows to the cart, but take their calves home, away from them. And take the ark of the LORD and place it on the cart and put in a box at its side the figures of gold, which you are returning to him as a guilt offering. Then send it off and let it go its way and watch. If it goes up on the way to its own land, to Beth-shemesh, then it is he who has done us this great harm, but if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that struck us; it happened to us by coincidence.”   
1 Samuel 6:7–9 (ESV)

The men did so, and took two milk cows and yoked them to the cart and shut up their calves at home. And they put the ark of the LORD on the cart and the box with the golden mice and the images of their tumors. And the cows went straight in the direction of Beth-shemesh along one highway, lowing as they went. They turned neither to the right nor to the left, and the lords of the Philistines went after them as far as the border of Beth-shemesh. 1 Samuel 6:10–12 (ESV)

Now the people of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley. And when they lifted up their eyes and saw the ark, they rejoiced to see it.   
1 Samuel 6:13 (ESV)

The cart came into the field of Joshua of Beth-shemesh and stopped there. A great stone was there. And they split up the wood of the cart and offered the cows as a burnt offering to the Lord. And the Levites took down the ark of the Lord and the box that was beside it, in which were the golden figures, and set them upon the great stone. And the men of Beth-shemesh offered burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices on that day to the Lord. 1 Samuel 6:14–15 (ESV)

And when the five lords of the Philistines saw it, they returned that day to Ekron. These are the golden tumors that the Philistines returned as a guilt offering to the LORD: one for Ashdod, one for Gaza, one for Ashkelon, one for Gath, one for Ekron, and the golden mice, according to the number of all the cities of the Philistines belonging to the five lords, both fortified cities and unwalled villages. The great stone beside which they set down the ark of the LORD is a witness to this day in the field of Joshua of Beth-shemesh. 1 Samuel 6:16–18 (ESV)

And he struck some of the men of Beth-shemesh, because they looked upon the ark of the LORD. He struck seventy men of them, and the people mourned because the LORD had struck the people with a great blow (slaughter). 1 Samuel 6:19 (ESV)

but they shall not go in to look on the holy things even for a moment, lest they die.” Numbers 4:20 (ESV)

* The people of God must keep a healthy fear of God.

Then the men of Beth-shemesh said, “Who is able to stand before the Lord, this holy God? And to whom shall he go up away from us?” So they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kiriath-jearim, saying, “The Philistines have returned the ark of the Lord. Come down and take it up to you.” 1 Samuel 6:20–21 (ESV)

And the men of Kiriath-jearim came and took up the ark of the LORD and brought it to the house of Abinadab on the hill. And they consecrated his son Eleazar to have charge of the ark of the LORD. From the day that the ark was lodged at Kiriath-jearim, a long time passed, some twenty years, and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD.   
1 Samuel 7:1–2 (ESV)

Applications

1. God loves to rescue us when things look hopeless.
2. The answer for how anyone can stand against God’s wrath is found in the construction of the ark.

Then the men of Beth-shemesh said, “Who is able to stand before the Lord, this holy God?…” 1 Samuel 6:20 (ESV)

…whom God put forward as a *propitiation* by his blood, to be received by faith… Romans 3:25 (ESV)

Life Group Questions

1. What did you learn in this week’s lesson that you did not know? What questions do you have?
2. What do these chapters teach us about God’s character?
3. What mistake did the Israelites of Beth-Shemesh make when handling the ark? How can we make a similar mistake today? Read Psalm 111:10, Hebrews 10:31, 1 Peter 2:17.
4. In 1 Samuel 5:4, Dagon was face down in the dirt and needed to be put back on his pedestal by the people that worshipped him. What are the things we worship today? What does this teach us about the way things we worship will fail us? Read Isaiah 46:7.
5. It was only after the ark seemed completely defeated that God “resurrected” it in power. Where else in the Bible does God snatch victory out of defeat? How is that similar to what God did with Jesus? How can we expect to see this character quality of God works its way out in our life?
6. How does the ark portray the work of Christ? Read Hebrews 9:1-14.