

# A Man After God's Own Heart – 1 Samuel

1 Samuel 5:1-7:1

"The Power of God" – May 28, 2017



## Introduction

By the end of chapter 4, all hope seemed lost for Israel. They'd suffered a great defeat at the hands of the Philistines, losing 34,000 troops, their priests, and the Ark of God. The last scene of chapter 4 is Israel lamenting the fact that the glory had left Israel – and, *it had!* The people of God faced a leadership crisis that was fed by a misunderstanding of God. They failed to honor God, but they needed to learn that God's jealousy for His glory can be God's mercy for us. Israel had drifted far from God, but God graciously reminds them (and us) who He is – that we may know what it means to love and follow Him.

## Pray

Before you begin, take some time to ask God to help you understand His word, to reveal what needs to change in you, and for the grace to follow Him in response.

## Sermon Outline

- I. Worship God, Instead of Dead Ends (5:1-12)
- II. Worship God's Way, For God's Glory (6:1-7:1)

## Read & Discuss

- 1) Read [1 Samuel 5:1-12](#)

Though it seemed like the Philistines had defeated the God of Israel, their celebration was premature. True, God's glory had left Israel, but it had not left God. The Ark of God was placed next to Dagon (a Philistine god) as a trophy of war, but Dagon ends up bowing down to Yahweh and losing his hand and head! Poor Dagon, he needed the Philistines to put him back together like Humpty Dumpty who fell off the wall. One thing we learn from this chapter is that Yahweh, the God of Scripture, is the only true God. Man may create idols and false gods, but they are only a dead end that cannot save. What are things you are tempted to trust in *other* than the true God? Take a moment to read [Psalm 135:15-18](#). Scripture teaches us that we become like that which we worship. What is the effect of worshipping a false god; what is the effect of worshipping the true God?

As God makes His victory lap thru the major cities of Philistia (Ashdod, Gath, Ekron, Ashkelon, and Gaza), it's clear that He's doing this on His own. Dagon owed his existence to the imagination of men and needed to be propped up, but not so with God. He doesn't need us. Why is the fact that God doesn't need us, good news? How does it set us free?

Additional reading: Isaiah 46:1-7, Isaiah 42:8, Exodus 9:15-16

## 2) Read [1 Samuel 6:1-7:1](#)

Chapter 6 records the strange event of milk cows carrying the Ark of God back to Israel with a creative guilt offering the Philistines came up with. After God's hand had laid heavy on them, the Philistines cried uncle and sent the Ark back. What was clear from their method though was that God, in His providence, was bringing the symbol of His presence back home. It's true that God doesn't need us, but in His mercy, He wants His people. In His mercy, God connects His zeal for His glory with our salvation. So, in Psalm 25:11 David prays "*For the sake of your name, O Lord, forgive my iniquity, though it is great.*" He prays for God to forgive not because he's a good guy (he knows he's not) but for the sake of God's name. The Christian life involves work (Philippians 2:12, Colossians 3:23, Hebrews 12:14), but work that recognizes the results are up to God (1 Corinthians 3:6) and the work is not to earn God's favor but because we already have it in Christ (Ephesians 2:8-10). Are you ever exhausted because you're carrying burdens that God alone is to carry? How does the truth that God doesn't need you but involves His people in His plans shape the way you work?

The end of chapter 6 records the surprising death of 70 men who mishandle the Ark of God, forgetting that He is holy. Who can stand before a holy God? What has Jesus done for us to make it possible for sinful people like us, to stand before a holy God? How does the gospel of Jesus cause us to approach God with reverence and awe (Hebrews 12:28) *and* bold confidence (Hebrews 4:16).

Additional reading: Revelation 3:19-20, Matthew 11:28-30

\*As an exercise in meditating on the holiness of God, imagine what the High Priest went thru when he, once a year entered the Holy of Holies where the ark of God rested. You can read through Leviticus 16 *and* check out Shai Linne's song "[High Priest.](#)"

### **Prayer of Response**

Spend time praying together in response to God's word for His help and greater faith to follow Him in the week to come.

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