

## Who Is Your Ebenezer?

Who is the rock in your life?

First Samuel 7

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Song Leader and Song Suggestions: Larry Amberg – “O Thou Fount of Every Blessing” (500)

### Prelude:

#### **I. During the time of Eli,**

- A. Israel had a superstitious view of the things of God,
- B. especially of the Ark of the Testimony,
  - 1. believing that if they had it with them during war,
  - 2. it would bring victory,
    - a) as though how they lived, and
    - b) as though whether there was a God,
      - (1) did not matter.
      - (2) To them, religion had become a good luck charm.
- C. Their superstitious view of the Ark
  - 1. did not mean there was not a legitimate use for it.
  - 2. Truly, the Lord Himself wanted them to have it.

#### **II. What do you think of the things of religion?**

- A. Does having a cross bring you good luck?
- B. Does coming to church bring you good luck?
  - 1. And why do we seek good luck?
  - 2. Should we not seek the Lord, the source of all blessings?

#### **III. Let us find out whether Israel learned of their source of blessings.**

### Persuasion:

#### **I. First Samuel 7.1–2 – The Ark’s New Home**

**1 Then the men of Kirjath Jearim came and took the ark of the Lord, and brought it into the house of Abinadab on the hill, and consecrated Eleazar his**

**son to keep the ark of the Lord. 2 So it was that the ark remained in Kirjath Jearim a long time; it was there twenty years. And all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord.**

- A. The men of Kirjath Jearim took the Ark from Beth Shemesh, and
  - 1. found a man's place on a hill
  - 2. which, evidently, they believed to be a good place for the Ark.
- B. They took the son of Abinadab, Eleazar,
  - 1. consecrated him and
  - 2. had him keep the Ark,
    - a) which I would gather meant that he protected it and
    - b) just in general looked after it.
- C. Israel left the Ark there a long time, 20 years,
  - 1. probably because they were afraid to move it, since
  - 2. it should have gone back to Shiloh.
    - a) Why did Israel leave it there for so long?
      - (1) They saw the curse of the cities of the Philistines,
        - (a) when the Lord put
          - i) tumors on their bodies, and
          - ii) filled the land with rats.
        - (b) They saw the relief of those cities when they moved the Ark.
      - (2) They saw what happened to the people of Israel in Beth Shemesh,
        - (a) when they looked into the Ark, and
        - (b) the Lord took the lives of thousands of them.
    - b) Once they found a secure place and a family willing to host it,
      - (1) they saw no need to move it.
      - (2) However, they did not seem totally happy about it.

D. Finally, the children of Israel did not lament after the Ark of the Lord, but

1. they lamented after the Lord of the Ark.
2. This is when things started to turn around for Israel.
  - a) God wants people.
  - b) He wants us to want Him.
    - (1) What God did on the cross
    - (2) shows the extreme to which He went to win us.
      - (a) How can we hold ourselves back?
      - (b) Let us give to Him as He has given to us.

E. Therefore, if your life lacks the Lord,

1. lament after Him,
2. as Israel did,
  - a) seeking Him more than anything in life and
  - b) more than life itself.

## II. First Samuel 7.3-4 – When the Lord Will Help Us

**3 Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, "If you return to the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths from among you, and prepare your hearts for the Lord, and serve Him only; and He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines." 4 So the children of Israel put away the Baals and the Ashtoreths, and served the Lord only.**

A. Lamenting after the Lord and

1. expecting a response from Him
2. requires something from us.
  - a) There are conditions.
  - b) I know saying that is not popular, but
    - (1) what we see in verse 3,
    - (2) we see throughout the Bible, "If...then..."

- (a) If you want such and such from the Lord,
- (b) then you must also do such and such.
  - i) If you do such and such,
  - ii) then the Lord will do such and such.

B. What did Samuel say?

1. "If you return to the Lord with all your hearts," showing
  - a) that we have to return to the Lord, and
  - b) that we must do so with all our heart.
    - (1) We want endless and huge blessings from the Lord.
    - (2) How then can we give Him only part of our hearts?
      - (a) Do you see Him giving us part of His heart?
      - (b) Look at the ministry of Jesus.
        - i) Did He only give half, or even a majority of His heart?
        - ii) He gave Himself 100% to the Father and to us.
2. Samuel said further, if we wish to return to Him,
  - a) we have to put away the idols.
  - b) An idol is a foreign god,
    - (1) like the Ashtoreths to the Israelites.
    - (2) We have Jesus Christ.
      - (a) Add any other lord, and
      - (b) we are adding a foreign god.
  - c) Paul reminded of the foundation of our lives,

**11 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ (1Co 3.11).**

3. Again, Samuel elaborated, that if we wish to return to the Lord,

- a) we have to prepare our hearts for Him.
- b) Some people wait for a holy zap from heaven.
  - (1) The question is not whether the Lord wants you to return.
  - (2) He does.
    - (a) The question is, Do you want to return to Him?
    - (b) You will have to change your heart.
      - i) You cannot continue to think as you have before.
      - ii) He dwells in your heart, so prepare it,

**15 For thus says the High and Lofty One  
Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy:  
"I dwell in the high and holy place,  
With him who has a contrite and humble spirit,  
To revive the spirit of the humble,  
And to revive the heart of the contrite ones."  
(Isa 57.15)**

- 4. Finally, Samuel concluded that if we wish to return to the Lord,
  - a) we have to serve Him and serve Him alone.
  - b) It cannot be the Lord and some god that we add.
    - (1) Yes, He is a jealous God.
    - (2) How many of you will share your spouse with someone else?
      - (a) So it is with the Creator.
      - (b) This means we cannot even serve ourselves.
        - i) It is not about us.
        - ii) It is about Him.

### **III. First Samuel 7.5–6 – Praying, Pouring Out Water, and Fasting**

**5 And Samuel said, "Gather all Israel to Mizpah, and I will pray to the Lord for you." 6 So they gathered together at Mizpah, drew water, and poured it out before the Lord. And they fasted that day, and said there, "We have sinned**

**against the Lord.” And Samuel judged the children of Israel at Mizpah.**

- A. Look at Samuel as a leader among God’s people.
  - 1. He did not wait for the people to ask him to do something.
  - 2. He took the initiative and acted.
- B. When you want to strengthen your return to the Lord:
  - 1. Have Christian leaders pray for you.
  - 2. Gather with others who desire the same thing.
  - 3. Pour out an offering before the Lord.
  - 4. Fast.
  - 5. Confess your sin.
    - a) These things prepare your heart to serve the Lord.
    - b) They show the intensity with which you intend to serve Him.

**IV. First Samuel 7.7–9 – When Trouble Comes**

**7 Now when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel had gathered together at Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard of it, they were afraid of the Philistines. 8 So the children 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.” 9 And Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the Lord. Then Samuel cried out to the Lord for Israel, and the Lord answered him.**

- A. Israel had not gathered to fight the Philistines, but
  - 1. the Philistines misinterpreted Israel’s intentions.
  - 2. Enemies have a tendency to do such.
- B. Therefore, the Philistines moved against Israel,
  - 1. which frightened the children of Israel, for
  - 2. they had already lost 34,000 men in two battles to the Philistines.
- C. However, Israel did the right thing.

1. They did not trust in the Ark of the Testimony as a good luck charm.
2. They asked Samuel to cry out to God that He save them from the enemy.

D. Samuel did as they asked, and

1. he offered a whole burnt offering.
2. Ask your leaders and others to pray for you, because
  - a) they care for you,
  - b) they want to serve you, and
    - (1) it is in your best interest,
    - (2) their best interest, and
    - (3) in the Lord's best interest
      - (a) for them to pray for you.
      - (b) The enemy cannot contend with the prayers of God's people.

E. The Lord answered the prayer of Samuel.

1. He has answered our prayers.
2. Open your eyes to the spiritual battles
  - a) being waged against our young people, and
  - b) pray for them as much as you have anything else.

#### **V. First Samuel 7.10–11 – When the Lord Thunders**

**10 Now as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel. But the Lord thundered with a loud thunder upon the Philistines that day, and so confused them that they were overcome before Israel. 11 And the men of Israel went out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, and drove them back as far as below Beth Car.**

A. The enemy sought to attack even as Samuel was making the offering.

B. However, the enemy did not know

1. that now the people and the Lord were in synch.
2. This time the Philistines would not kill 34,000 Israelites, but

- a) the Lord would turn the battle against the Philistines,
  - b) who thought they could defeat Israel and her God.
- C. The Lord thundered.
- 1. He thundered that He might confuse them.
  - 2. Pray to the Lord that He confuse our enemies.
    - a) Once He does that,
    - b) we must pursue the enemy.
      - (1) We have a part to play.
      - (2) Fight the good fight of the faith.

## **VI. First Samuel 7.12–14 – Who Is Your Ebenezer?**

**12 Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen, and called its name Ebenezer, saying, “Thus far the Lord has helped us.” 13 So the Philistines were subdued, and they did not come anymore into the territory of Israel. And the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. 14 Then the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron to Gath; and Israel recovered its territory from the hands of the Philistines. Also there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.**

- A. Who or what is your Ebenezer?
- 1. Ebenezer means “stone of help.”
  - 2. This stone signified who had truly helped them.
- B. Since Israel and the Lord were in tune with one another, and
- 1. since Samuel judged the people rather than Eli,
  - 2. the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel,
    - a) enabling Israel to take back cities that the Philistines had taken.
- C. The Amorites, great sinners before the Lord living in the Land of Canaan,
- 1. saw how things went between Israel the Philistia, and
  - 2. they decided to make peace with Israel.

- a) Smart move!
- D. If you set up a monument to your help,
  - 1. whom would it memorialize?
  - 2. If you truly do not know,
    - a) think of your first response when in trouble.
    - b) What do you do?
      - (1) What is your natural reflex
      - (2) when greater-you troubles overwhelm you?

### **VII. First Samuel 7.15–17 – Samuel, Judge of Israel**

**15 And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. 16 He went from year to year on a circuit to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah, and judged Israel in all those places. 17 But he always returned to Ramah, for his home was there. There he judged Israel, and there he built an altar to the Lord.**

- A. Samuel probably judged Israel longer than any other judge.
  - 1. They had a great treasure in this man.
  - 2. He knew the Lord, and
    - a) that enabled him to do what had to be done in Israel.
    - b) Israel was happy with the arrangement.
- B. He made an annual circuit,
  - 1. going to three cities,
  - 2. where the Israelites could meet him, and
    - a) have him judge their cases.
    - b) Conflict arises between brethren, and
      - (1) someone like Samuel knows what to do.
      - (2) It is easier to settle differences between children
      - (3) than it is to settle differences between adults.

C. He had a home in Ramah.

1. He also judged Israel in his hometown, and
2. he built an altar to the Lord.

**Exhortation:**

**I. Right now the Lord wants to know how you view Him.**

- A. He wants to know whether you think
- B. His things are mere good luck charms to you.

**II. If your view of Him has been inaccurate,**

- A. return to Him today.
- B. Turn your heart away from anything that competes with Him.
  1. Make Him first in your thinking.
  2. Jesus made
    - a) the Father first in His thinking, and
    - b) you first in His thinking and affection.
      - (1) What do you think of Jesus?
      - (2) He is the Lord we have read about in First Samuel 7.