**Lost Joy Returned**

**(1 Samuel 7:1-17)**

**Yearly Theme: *“Joy is…”***

**Series Title: *Joy in the Promise***

**March 22nd, 2020**

***Something to think about:***

What is the will of God and how do we discern it? How do we know what is from God and what is from something else? How can we make sense of everything in the world and still maintain a sense of hope and joy? When all hope seems lost, what should we do in the midst of distress and uncertainty?

As we continue our series today entitled, “Joy in the Promise,” we come to the continuing saga of the plight of the Israelites in the Promised Land. If you remember from a couple weeks ago, we looked at the “Cycles of Madness” that the Israelites were going through that entailed: *Sin, Slavery, Supplication (Repentance), and Salvation.*

Today, we witness that same cycle under the leadership of the prophet/judge Samuel. However, in today’s passage of Scripture, we see the ending of a period of sin/slavery and the beginning of repentance/salvation.

Let’s take a look:

**Turn in your Bibles to: *1 Samuel 7:1-17 (NLT)***

The key point this morning is this…

**Key Point*: “Sometimes the loss of joy is due to the fact we are out of the will of God.”***

Consider the words of C. S. Lewis, who writes,

“Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition, when infinite joy is offered to us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in the slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.”

What changed the Israelites from contentment with “mud pies in the slum” to experiencing a vacation at the sea? What caused them to turn from idolatry and sin and back to God? What were the conditions of their circumstances?

Here are a few considerations that will help to answer those questions this morning:

1. **Consider the condition and place of the ark of the covenant.**

What is the condition of God’s meeting place with you? What is the condition of your heart and mind toward the things of God? Does it stand in disarray, or is it in a place of central importance in your life?

1. **Consider the condition and focus of the hearts of Israel.**

In the midst of crisis, in the midst of impending attack, what is our first response? What is your first response? Do we overcome evil with good?[[1]](#footnote-1) Do you intercede through prayer and desire GOD’s glory to shine through you in the midst of difficulty? Are the sacrifices you’re offering, offered in good faith and hope that God will come through, or are they offered from a heart of bitterness and obligation?

***Something to take home:***

What will be our Ebenezer (“stone of help”)?

The same place that this memorial, this Ebenezer, this “stone of help” was set up, is the very same place that the Philistines just 20-years earlier had defeated them and taken the ark of God. This Ebenezer would remind the people to keep their faith and their hopes squarely on God when they were tempted to turn away and worship idols again. This “stone of help” would help them remember how God delivered them from their fiercest enemy, and provided a way of safe passage as a nation.

Finally, I love what the great commentator, Matthew Henry, says of Samuel in his conclusion on this passage,

“Samuel was a protector and deliverer to Israel, not by dint of sword, as Gideon, nor by strength of arm, as Samson, but by the power of prayer to God and carrying on a work of reformation among the people. Religion and piety are the best securities of a nation.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

**Key Point*: “Sometimes the loss of joy is due to the fact we are out of the will of God.”***

1. Romans 12:21 (NLT), Don’t let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)