



Scott Turansky, Senior Pastor
November 13, 2016

1 SAMUEL 7

1 Samuel Series

You can open your Bibles with me to 1 Samuel 7 where we will be today.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we do come before you now and we ask for your blessing on Jaime and Terrell as they give birth this week. We pray for Jaime that you would give her peace and strength through the birthing process. We pray for Terrell that you'd give him grace to be the husband to his wife in this particular way that she needs him right now. We pray for a healthy baby and we pray for your hand to be on the doctors and the nurses that are involved in this as well. We ask for your blessing in that regard.

Heavenly Father, we also want to come before you now and we want to pray for Donald Trump. Being our newly elected President, we want to come before you and ask that you would do a work inside of his heart. I ask, Lord, that you would cause him to choose wise people to surround him, who will give him advice and counsel that is wise and helpful. We pray that you would give him wisdom to unite our country. I pray particularly for his ability to handle challenges that come his way. Sometimes he just acts out in some poor ways to challenges and I pray that you would give him a compassionate heart for people that disagree with him as he tries to lead the whole country, not just a part of it. Lord, we do ask that you would be working in his heart, in his life, and that the testimony of those Christians around him (we know that there are several right around close to him) would impact his heart.

Lord, we ask for our country that you would do a work in our country that is significant and powerful, that the laws that are created, the judgments that are made by our judges would be ones that pursue righteousness. We ask, Lord, that you would protect us and protect the religious freedoms that we have. We ask for the next generation that's coming up behind us that you would be protecting them and engaging them in a spiritual way as well. So Lord, we're obeying you by praying for our leaders and asking you to work in their lives, recognizing that you are the king, you're in control, and that we trust you wholly. In Jesus' name, amen.

The state of both religious and national life had slipped by an all time low. I'm not talking about America, although I will make applications to our own country. I'm talking about Israel in 1 Samuel 7. The culture was spinning down. They were in the Time of the Judges, we call it. The Time of the Judges is characterized by this one statement repeated over and over again throughout the book of Judges. The statement is this: *They did what was right in their own eyes.* What that means is they relied on their own opinions and their popular opinions for their decision making instead of on the standard of God's word. It's dangerous when a country starts doing

what's right in their own eyes and coming up with their own ideas instead of relying on a standard of God's word.

Now they had several reprieves in the period of Judges or saviors that came along and rescued them from the hand of the Philistines and the other enemies that they had, the Mideonites and so on. However, we don't really see a heart change among the people during that time. We don't see a real returning to the Lord during that time. So the spiritual tide is going further and further away when Samuel is born.

God is raising up a man, Samuel, and he's praying for revival to take place in the culture. We read about that revival in 1 Samuel 7. I think a very appropriate passage for us to look at today, given our own culture, our own country, and the things that are going on. I think that we'll learn some valuable lessons here for us personally as well as we can think about this on a national level.

Samuel, the man who was born, grows up in a home that is an imperfect home, to say the least. Which should be an encouragement to any of us who have homes that are broken or challenged or people doing the wrong things or whatever. Eli was a priest who didn't limit his sons' wicked behavior and their leadership within the community became normal as sinful. When that happens bad things happen. The alarms should be going off and I think are going off in the minds of discerning spiritual people so that when the opportunity for revival comes there are people who are ready for that.

The Bible says about this time in chapter 3 that the word of the Lord was rare in those moments. For this wickedness becomes commonplace in life, then religion has this place that doesn't proclaim the faithful message of God's word or the importance of repenting from sin. They also had other influences like the continuous opposition of the Philistines that didn't persuade them to make a repentance in their own hearts. Not even the loss of their most sacred treasure, the ark of the covenant, that was taken into Philistine territory for several years did that command for them something. In fact they're going to take that treasure and they're going to put it into storage for twenty years. Among godly, but it's still in storage during that time as we're going to open in chapter 7.

But I want you to know that it's during this time that God is preparing the people for something very important. I would suggest that God is preparing us for such a time as this – when there may be a new receptivity to God's word or maybe a willingness to listen to the message that God has for us to change us. Things were really bad in their culture and they're ready for what happens in chapter 7. I think we're going to see more about what revival looks like and we're going to be guided through the process by looking at these verses.

Look at verse 1 with me with an open heart. *So the men of Kiriath Jearim came and took up the ark of the Lord. They brought it to Abinadab's house on the hill and consecrated Eleazar his son to guard the ark of the Lord. The ark remained at Kiriath Jearim a long time—twenty years in all.*

It was like it was an unwanted trunk in an attic. It was just set aside. These honorable men of Kiriath Jearim took the ark, dedicated Eleazar to watch over it and to care for it. But it was still put away by the nation as something that they weren't using. That means there was no Yom Kippur. That means there were no feasts where the blood sacrifices were offered on the mercy seat to bring reconciliation for the people and atonement.

Then the next words in our passage say this: *Then all the people of Israel turned back to the Lord.* If you have the NIV Bible like I do, you miss something in this passage. I would say all the other translations translate it differently. They use the word *mourn* there. *All the people mourned* or they *lamented*. When we read in the NIV that they *turned back to the Lord*, which is what it means, it's not an inaccurate translation, but the process of lamenting is an important piece of the whole process that I think is important. Because mourning is a prerequisite to revival. Overwhelming sadness and despair leading to the only one who can help.

Now if you were here last Sunday you got to hear Ed preach a fantastic sermon. I listened to it during the week this week. I am honored that that sermon is up on our website and you can get to it by the app. If you haven't heard it, I would go listen to it because he described what mourning is. He described that young lady who experienced the coming together of her faith and the pain of her past in a way that caused her to lament loudly. I was just so touched by that because that's the same response that we must have if revival is going to take place. It's the picture of a child weeping and running to grandpa on the stage here or weeping and running to a parent needing help.

Now you can think nationally about this. But I also like to think about it personally because only when a person starts to weep over their addiction and what it's doing to them are close to revival. Only when a husband is weeping over the damage in the relationship with his wife is he close to revival. I would suggest that that lamenting is so significant for us. Not only for us personally, but also for our government, for our families. The first thing necessary for personal revival is that we must realize our sinful condition and lament over it and the results of it.

I would suggest that if you look at the church at large today, we are in bad shape. Our country is in bad shape. Sadly many of the churches are in bad shape and here's why. We live in a culture that is pressing us into a mold, as Romans 12 says to us. The culture is pressing in on us in so many different ways. We become so accustomed to violence that you get a message that there's been another shooting and you go, "Oh," and you just go on to the next thing without realizing the significance and the pain that that has caused someone, some families somewhere that they're experiencing. There are people being persecuted for their faith all over and we are apathetic toward that. That sexuality in our country is being attacked in so many different ways with pornography, the LGBT agenda, bathroom issues, sexuality in the schools is being redefined, immorality is very prominent. We are being squeezed.

So here's the question. Are you changing? How many churches have you visited or do you know that when you walk into that place that every one of your sins is brought up before your eyes from the power of the Holy Spirit and God's grace. How many churches do you know that when a word comes forth from the Lord that it speaks to you in such a personal way that you were touched as if God is speaking to you directly. I hope that you hear it here.

The truth of the matter is that in all honesty people among us are changing and they don't realize it. They've lost their fight. They've lost their heart. When spiritual blindness comes, they don't recognize it. Many Christians today are changing. They're being squeezed into the mold. They aren't the way they used to be. We don't see brokenness. We don't see compassion. We don't see commitment to Jesus Christ.

Did you just let that go in one ear and out the other? Because I think that's an important message for every one of us. Because it could be you. Are you changing? Are you becoming pressed into the mold of this culture? Where is the mourning? Where is the fasting? The body of Christ is changing. Where's the confessing? Where's the repentance? Where's the passion for Jesus?

We've got all kinds of how-to conferences. How to cope with life conferences. How to build a bigger church. How to improve people skills. How to improve computer skills. We're changing. What we need is not more how-tos. We need more of God. Modern religion focuses on filling churches with people. The gospel focuses on filling people with God. We need that in our lives. So in order for revival to take place we must recognize our sinful condition and mourn over it and the results of it.

Verse 3 – *So Samuel said to all the Israelites, “If you are returning to the Lord with all your hearts, then rid yourselves of the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths and commit yourselves to the Lord and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.” So the Israelites put away their Baals and Ashtoreths, and served the Lord only.*

There are two enemies. I want you to see there are two enemies here. There's the enemies of the situations that are around them and we experience them in our lives. The enemies of financial pressure and relationship dilemmas and wickedness in our culture and other kinds of things that exist. That's one of the enemies that's out there. But the other enemy is the enemy inside that has the Baals and the Ashtoreths. So Samuel is saying you need to get rid of those because revival requires action.

We can become passive in our faith as Christians, but it's like going up a down escalator. If you're passive, you're going the wrong direction. We must be active in our faith.

So when says to them they need to *turn from their idols and serve him only*, we have to come to a place in our lives where we say, “I've had enough. I'm not going to put up with any more lukewarmness. Lord, change me to be more like you, not to become more like the culture. I seek your heart.” We have to allow God to lead us to this place of total commitments in our lives.

In order for us to experience revival personally, most of us have to give up something. You've got to look at that. He says you have to give up the Baals and the Ashtoreths. That's what he's telling those people. But most of us in order to experience revival must give up something. You've just got to come to face with that because our lives are so complicated that it's hard to serve the Lord given our current lives. We have to give up something. Sometimes it's just the busyness we have to give up in our calendars. Sometimes it's something like anger that we hold onto that's hindering us from experiencing God's grace and all of its power.

We have to finally come to this place where we say enough is enough. That's where they came to. Enough is enough. We want to serve the Lord wholeheartedly. We cannot manage without the Lord. That is the key statement that they're making. It's not till you come to the place where you say enough is enough. I've had enough. I'm willing to change. Can you experience this revival? Whatever it takes, Lord, change me. The enemy is pressing in.

Have you had enough yet? When you've had enough then you're willing to say, "Lord, I want to be that source of strength inside. I need to have the integrity of your words and your power in my life. I've had enough of the problems in my job. I've had enough problems with my kids. I have had enough of the problems with my health."

If you're going to be victorious then you have to desire the Lord with all of your heart. That's what's happening in this passage. It's all of your heart like you never have before.

There's three things that he's saying there. One he's saying you need to get rid of the Baals, idols, and Ashtoreths. They were little figurines that represented their gods. They're really backup plans. So you would pray to this one and if that doesn't work then you pray to this one and so on. I would suggest for us they aren't little figurines but they're more backup plans. There are no plan B's when it comes to the Lord. There's only one plan, Plan A, and that's serving the Lord. We're serving Him wholeheartedly. When we serve Him wholeheartedly then He supersedes any other loyalty that we have in our lives.

It's easy to complain about problems while still refusing to obey what God has for us. We must serve the Lord wholeheartedly, get rid of the foreign gods. I would suggest that the foreign gods for us are much more subtle than they were for the people in Israel. It might be money. It might be success. It might be material goods or pride. It could be even the church or the family or some service project or hobby. They aren't bad things, but they get in the way of the most important thing, which is to love God with all of our heart.

He also says in those verses to fix your heart on God. We must have a heart that's directed and pointed. Not that's just meandering around based on the latest report or news item or something like that. We're fixing our heart. It's a deliberate statement. And notice it says *serve him only*. Not enough to cleanse ourselves from the inadequate crutches of life, but to serve God with all of our hearts.

Notice the response is *he will deliver them out of the hands of the Philistines*. God provides solutions. He provides victory. He provides peace in the midst of chaos. If we're going to be victorious then we have to let some of these things go. I know that in some cases you might be hurt. Maybe you've been hurt deeply and you have all the reason to be hurt because you've been mistreated. But that may be hindering you from experiencing God's grace in all of its fullness and you have to let it go in order to experience the grace that God wants for you in our life.

Verse 5 – *Then Samuel said, "Assemble all Israel at Mizpah, and I will intercede with the Lord for you." When they had assembled at Mizpah, they drew water and poured it out before the Lord. On that day they fasted and there they confessed, "We have sinned against the Lord." Now*

Samuel was serving as leader of Israel at Mizpah. Mizpah is a tower that looks over and watches out. Notice the things that took place. Samuel first interceded. Don't minimize the power of intercession in our lives.

This week a woman I'm working with contacted me and she said, "I just have to set up an appointment with you to talk." You have no idea who she is. She's not from around here even. I talk to her on the phone. She is very troubled because her sister is dying, is in hospice, and has weeks to live. The lady is a devout believer, but the woman who is dying is not a Christian. She is just so concerned. She shared her faith with this sister before who has refused to listen to it.

So I brought her to this passage and I just talked to her about the renewal that she needs in her heart because she feels defeated. I want to say you don't have to feel defeated because you can intercede. You can come before the Lord on behalf of this person and you can call on God for this person in your life. This passage just has so much relevance to the daily interactions of this woman as she's going to minister to this particular sister that she loves so dearly.

It says they poured out water onto the ground in a way that the water could not be gathered up again. The idea is we pour out our hearts so far so that we're totally committed. We're right on the edge and we jump over and we have total commitment to the Lord.

Notice they say, "*We have sinned against the Lord.*" It's very interesting that they're saying this because they're actually identifying a corporate sin. That ark of the covenant has been hidden away for so long and hasn't been used. They're saying it's not just my personal sin, but we're all committing sin, and praying, "Lord, we're confessing those sins before you."

Revival is an important thing in our lives. It changes who we are and it draws us back to the Lord. Here are some quotes about revival that I thought were particularly stimulating for me.

Robert Coleman defines revival this way: "Revival is that sovereign work of God in which He visits His own people, restoring and releasing them into the fullness of His blessing."

Blackaby says, "Revival is a return to spiritual health after a period of decline and sin and broken fellowship with God. Revival is for God's people when they need to be forgiven and restored to life, spiritual health, and vitality."

Richard Owen Roberts says, "Revival is an extraordinary work of the Holy Spirit producing extraordinary results."

We all need that revival in our lives. We need it, and it starts with you and it starts with me.

Verse 7 – *When the Philistines heard that Israel had assembled at Mizpah, the rulers of the Philistines came up to attack them.* So now we're back to business as usual. You just got to see it. This is back to the way we were before. There's battles going on. There's fights that are happening. *When the Israelites heard of it, they were afraid because of the Philistines.* We're back to the same place we were before the revival started taking place, but the results will be different.

They said to Samuel, “Do not stop crying out to the Lord our God for us, that he may rescue us from the hand of the Philistines.” Then Samuel took a suckling lamb and sacrificed it as a whole burnt offering to the Lord. He cried out to the Lord on Israel’s behalf, and the Lord answered him.

This suckling lamb is this picture of a burnt offering. It’s a total sacrifice. Some of the offerings were ones where you could participate in the offering and you could eat some of the meat. In this case the whole offering is given up to the Lord. It’s all transferred to Him. That sweet smelling aroma is going up in the presence of God.

In stark simplicity we have those words *and the Lord answered him*. When our hearts are loose to receive the revival that God wants us to experience, then we come into this victorious life that He wants us to experience. It’s the joyful communion that He offers us.

Look at the rest of the story in verse 10. *While Samuel was sacrificing the burnt offering (that is while it is happening, while the revival was taking place, in the midst of the intercession that was going on), the Philistines drew near to engage Israel in battle. But that day the Lord thundered with loud thunder against the Philistines and threw them into such a panic that they were routed before the Israelites. The men of Israel rushed out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, slaughtering them along the way to a point below Beth Kar.*

The picture is this. While the Israelites are in revival mode and they’re praying before the Lord and Samuel is lifting up this prayer before God on their behalf, there’s total dedication taking place in the lives of the people that the Philistines are coming right in that moment. The battle is going on. The world is crouching into their lives.

Notice what happens. The Philistines while they’re climbing up the mountains to fight did not realize that the battle had already been fought. Samuel and the Israelites had fought the battle on their knees. The smoke of the burnt offering was carried into the heavens and at that moment the heavens split open and the lightning and the thunder came down against the enemy. God fought the battle that day.

What an amazing picture that must be to imagine the situation what was going on. You see the people praying, you see what’s going on, but then quickly they turn and they route their enemies and they end up killing them. It’s a fascinating picture. It’s just so amazing. It’s a miracle of what God does.

I want to say that God does miracles in the lives of people who are in revival mode. If we are totally dedicated to Jesus Christ, our hearts are totally committed to God, we will see miracles in our lives and then those lives of the people around us.

Verse 12 – *Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, saying, “Thus far the Lord has helped us.”*

Ebenezer is this monument because we are prone to forget. We need those monuments in our lives that remind us of God's faithfulness because we dedicated ourselves to the Lord at that moment. Satan is going to come along and find your area of weakness and he's going to want to fight you on that area of weakness. You need to go back and say, "Satan, look at the Ebenezer in my life. Look at the statement that I made. I am totally committed to God." To remind us of God's victories because it's not just about the past. We're going to experience challenges in the future and we need victories and we need to rely on that faith of those monuments where we saw God work in the past to carry us into the future for what God wants to do. Because the battle is not over. There are more enemies to be fought and more that's going to take place. The Ebenezers are opportunities for us to thank God for His tremendous grace and for His power, for us to rely on the promises He's given to us.

Verse 13 says – So the Philistines were subdued and they stopped invading Israel's territory. Throughout Samuel's lifetime, the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines. The towns from Ekron to Gath that the Philistines had captured from Israel were restored to Israel, and Israel delivered the neighboring territory from the hands of the Philistines. And there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.

Samuel continued as Israel's leader all the days of his life. From year to year he went on a circuit from Bethel to Gilgal to Mizpah, judging Israel in all those places. But he always went back to Ramah, where his home was, and there he also held court for Israel. And he built an altar there to the Lord.

The ramifications of the revival that took place had ongoing effects into the lives of people for years to come. The revival that takes place in our lives now affects many people, including future generations. It is very powerful and important what we do in our own hearts and our own lives when we're confronted with the reality of who God is and the challenges that we have in our own lives.

I would suggest that sometimes we find ourselves in the course of our lives playing church. What I mean by that is we come to church because we know that's the right thing to do and it satisfies something in our soul, but we come to church with an emptiness inside that something is missing or something isn't there that should be. I would suggest that we play church in a couple of different ways. Sometimes people come to church and they don't have Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. They don't have the personal relationship that they need with the Lord. That personal relationship is the core. That's what makes us function as a church. We have to have that core relationship.

If you haven't trusted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, I want to invite you to do that today so that you're not just playing church. That you're understanding the power that comes from knowing God in a very personal way.

The second way that we play church is when we start to change and be conformed to the culture in ways that draw us away from that original foundation of who Jesus Christ is. If you're changing today, if you find yourself being molded to the culture, you want to come back to Christ and put away the Ashtoreths and the Baals. You want to be able to come back and

dedicate your whole heart to the Lord and serve Him only. Then you won't be playing church anymore. You will be coming to church with something to share and something to give and something to communicate to the rest of the world because God is doing something dramatic inside of your heart and inside of your life.

Total commitment. Revival. It's powerful and it changes who we are. I don't think there's an option. Because the other options, besides revival and total dedication to God, are dangerous and disastrous and painful in our lives. We need to commit ourselves 100% totally to Jesus Christ and what He has for us. Amen?

Stand with me.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we ask right now that you would be working in each of our hearts. Convict us from your word today, Lord. Use the power of your Holy Spirit to point out the areas where we need to be broken and we need to change. Empty us so that we can receive the fullness of who you are. Break us of our pride and give us the ability to trust in you wholly in every area of our lives. We ask, Lord, for your grace to rain on us today. We stand under the spigot of your grace this morning and ask or you to do a deeper work inside of our hearts, each one of us. We pray this in Jesus' name, amen.