

THE PRAYER MEETING AT MIZPEH

BIBLE TEXT : I Samuel 7:1-17

LESSON 202 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE : "The LORD is my defence; and my God is the rock of my refuge" (Psalm 94:22)."

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

1 Samuel 7:1-17

¹ And the men of Kirjathjearim came, and fetched up the ark of the LORD, and brought it into the house of Abinadab in the hill, and sanctified Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the LORD.

² And it came to pass, while the ark abode in Kirjathjearim, that the time was long; for it was twenty years: and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD.

³ And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, *then* put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.

⁴ Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the LORD only.

⁵ And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the LORD.

⁶ And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured *it* out before the LORD, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the LORD. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh.

⁷ And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard *it*, they were afraid of the Philistines.

⁸ And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the LORD our God for us, that he will

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

Spiritual Darkness and Light

During the time that the Ark of God had been among the Philistines every village that had kept it had suffered God's judgment. The Philistines were glad to be rid of it and let the Israelites take it back into their territory.

In the Ark was the Word of God, and these commandments were to the Israelites what the Bible is to us. We have heard it said that the Bible has always preceded civilization; and wherever people have obeyed His commandments, God has blessed. Why then did not the Philistines enjoy the blessings of God while the Ark was with them? It was because they did not obey the commandments, nor did they worship God. They were heathen people who did not want to know the truth; so when the Word came to them and they refused it, they were condemned for their wickedness.

The Word of God today brings light to all who will believe it. But when people have the opportunity to know the truth of the Bible, and they refuse to live by it, that light becomes darkness to them — and how great is that darkness! They are in a worse condition than people who have never heard about Jesus.

The Ark was now with a family of Levites in Judah, and they were taking good care of it. God was blessing them. When, some years later, the Ark was in the house of Obededom, the Prophet said of it: "And the ark of the LORD continued in the house of Obededom the Gittite three months: and the LORD blessed Obed-edom, and all his household" (II Samuel 6:11).

The Blessing of Conviction

There was a special blessing that the Israelites enjoyed at this time while the Ark was with them. It was the blessing of conviction of sin, a feeling of guilt for the wrong they had done to God. "All the house of Israel lamented after the LORD."

You may not think that such unhappy feelings as are brought by conviction are a blessing, but conviction is that which brings sinners to God. When conviction comes upon a person he is miserable. Sometimes he may not feel like eating or sleeping. He may be afraid he is going to die suddenly, or that Jesus will come and he will be left behind to go through the tribulation. The one God is talking to in that way may sometimes wish God would leave him alone. But how thankful one should be for conviction!

If you are a sinner, think what it would mean if Jesus would never again convict you of sin. You would have no desire to repent and be saved, and you would be eternally lost. You cannot come to Jesus any time you want to. The Spirit of God must draw you to Him. Do answer Him When He calls and pleads lovingly with you to come to Father's house where you will be safe forever!

Think of the blessings that follow conviction, when the sinner answers and repents of his sins and is set free. The burden is gone. All life becomes new for him. He is a new creature in Christ Jesus.

save us out of the hand of the Philistines.

⁹ And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered *it for* a burnt offering wholly unto the LORD: and Samuel cried unto the LORD for Israel; and the LORD heard him.

¹⁰ And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel.

¹¹ And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until *they came* under Bethcar.

¹² Then Samuel took a stone, and set *it* between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us.

¹³ So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel: and the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel.

¹⁴ And the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron even unto Gath; and the coasts thereof did Israel deliver out of the hands of the Philistines. And there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.

¹⁵ And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life.

¹⁶ And he went from year to year in circuit to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places.

¹⁷ And his return *was* to Ramah; for there *was* his house; and there he judged Israel; and there he built an altar unto the LORD.

The temper, the mean disposition, the angry words he used to say, are all gone. In their place are songs of joy, a spirit of kindness to others, a helping hand to those in need; and, above all, the hope of life eternal with Jesus. And it all comes about because God lets conviction rest upon the sinner to make him sorry for his sins and seek forgiveness.

The Repentance of the Israelites

Conviction made the Israelites lament before the Lord. It showed them that they had broken His commandments, and they became very sorry for their sin. What could they do now?

Samuel was the judge, and he was also a true Prophet of God, and could tell the people what to do. If they would repent, God would forgive them and make them happy. They would have to destroy the sin and the idols that were among them.

The Israelites were so unhappy that they were glad to do anything God wanted them to do. They made their choice that day to go all the way with the Lord. We often hear children end their testimonies with the words, "I want to go all the way." That is exactly what God wants us to do — "go all the way."

When a sinner truly repents, he promises to give God his life, to do anything God asks. He is willing to give up the things that are displeasing to God, such as worldly amusements, lying, and fighting. He, perhaps, does not tell God that he will give up each individual thing — he cannot think of them all when he is praying — but when he promises his life to God that promise includes everything.

The Israelites destroyed their idols. This was a step which proved that they were repenting. Then Samuel called them to Mizpeh for a prayer meeting. Samuel was a faithful minister, a circuit rider who went from one community to another to teach people to serve God; and, like any true servant of the Lord, he loved to pray for the people who wanted to be saved.

A Revival at Mizpeh

What a revival there must have been at Mizpeh when that great host of the Israelites turned their hearts to God! Think how happy Samuel must have been to hear those people praying for forgiveness! The sight of one sinner who has just been redeemed thrills the heart of every Christian; and there is joy in Heaven when one lost soul is found. What rejoicing there must have been among the angels in glory when they heard the praises of this great company of sinners who were here forgiven! Praise fills the hearts of souls redeemed to God. The power of Satan has been broken, and the love of God rules their hearts. But Satan does not give up the fight.

Trials

Amidst all the rejoicing at Mizpeh there arose a cry of alarm. The Philistines were attacking. Satan had come to try to spoil the blessings of the great revival. But now the Israelites were in favor with God, and He would fight their battles. At first the Israelites were like new converts who had not yet learned how much God can do for them when they are being tried. They were afraid, and they cried to Samuel to pray much for them. Samuel did, and what an answer he received! The Lord thundered such great thunder that the Philistines became frightened and confused, and it was easy for the Israelites to drive them away.

It is a thrill to see God fight our battles. The person who is newly saved may never have seen God take a hand in his life in this manner, and great is the joy he feels with this new Dower in his life.

Complete Victory

The Israelites put the Philistines on the run and chased them all the way to Beth-car. What a glorious victory! Israel had not seen such triumph since the days of Joshua and Gideon. There had been times when small bands of the Philistines had been routed, but only after they had taken much plunder from the Israelites. Israel had then been satisfied with part-victories.

But now Israel had won a complete victory. They had driven the Philistines back to their own land. The Philistines' families at home must have been surprised when they saw their frightened soldiers returning, running for safety, without any of the grains and cattle and sheep which they usually brought with them from their raids on the Israelites.

The Spirit of Battle

There was a great difference in the camp of Israel. They had caught the spirit of battle. Their strength came from the Lord in their newly found relationship with Him, and they continued to smite the enemy until their country was free. They were prayed up and were strong to fight against sin.

One victory does not mean the end of the warfare. The Christian life is a continual battle, but "we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Romans 8:37). Day by day we must ask for new strength from the Lord. And that communion with God brings courage to fight the forces of evil, and we have enthusiasm to go forth in the name of the Lord to triumph

QUESTIONS

- 1 Where was the Ark of God at the time of this lesson?
- 2 When did the Ark bring blessings? and when did it bring judgment?
- 3 What is conviction?
- 4 Why were the Israelites lamenting?
- 5 What did Samuel tell them to do?
- 6 What did the Israelites do before they went to the prayer meeting at Mizpeh?
- 7 What happened at Mizpeh?
- 8 What interrupted the praises of the Israelites?
- 9 What did the Israelites do to the Philistines?
- 10 Why were the Israelites strong enough to completely defeat the enemy?