



The weekly newsletter article of Parkside Chapel

# LIFENEWS

## Trust in God

BY JEREMIAH SHAWVER, YOUTH PASTOR

In my Life Group, we have been walking through the book of 1 Samuel. 1 Samuel has a lot of interesting stories and important points made about God and His people. As we work through this book, one of our goals has been to read the stories we know slowly, taking our time rather than rush through parts of the Bible that we "know." I would encourage anyone to make this their practice, especially in familiar passages. One of the lessons we have been learning through the book of 1 Samuel is that God is in control.

I am not writing this because I think you don't know it, but as a reminder. In 1 Samuel, God causes Hannah to be able to get pregnant, He hardens the hearts of evil priests, He selects and rejects Saul, and He chooses a shepherd boy from Bethlehem to rule the people. This past week, we were looking at 1 Samuel 4; this passage is the first in a series of stories concerning the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark is lost to the Philistines, the evil priests die, their father Eli also dies, and finally, a little boy is given the name Ichabod (אִי-כָבוֹד) which means "Where is the Glory?"

This passage leaves the people of Israel in a crisis. They have lost the Ark, which was the resting place for the glory of God. The text makes it clear that it was the Israelites' actions that allowed the Ark to be captured by the Philistines. In this story, the Israelites have lost one battle and question why God has done this to them. Instead of asking God to go with them, they plan. "Why did the LORD defeat us today before the Philistines? Let's bring the Ark of the LORD's covenant from Shiloh. Then it will go with us and save us from our enemies." 1 Samuel 4:3

The Israelites decide they can use the Ark to force the hand of God. They think that there is no possibility that God would allow them to lose with this token on their side. Instead, they suffer a worse defeat. Three thousand

foot soldiers die at the hands of the Philistines. The Ark is lost. The priests all die. All this because they decided to force God to work on their behalf.

As you read this passage, you will see that while the Israelites make some horrible decisions, God is in control of the outcomes. God refuses to go with the priests and the armies as they attempt to force his hand. God will not be used as the pagan gods were used. He is not a token that can be taken into the battlefield for the Israelites to do with as they please. The Israelites cannot strongarm God.

How often do we attempt to do the same? We may not be at war or going into a literal battle, but how often do we attempt to have God fit into our plans? We plan out our lives and our years and then pray that God will bless us. This is not the model laid out in scripture. In James 4:13-15 James writes: **"Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will travel to such and such a city and spend a year there and do business and make a profit.'** Yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring — what your life will be! For you are like vapor that appears for a little while, then vanishes. Instead, you should say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that."

It is possible for us to make plans like the Israelites went to battle. James tells us that the wise way to make plans is to go forward sensitive to what the will of God is. In the Old Testament, they had the Urim and Thummim to help them discern if God would go with them. In the New Covenant, we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit to guide and direct us into the will of God. As we make decisions then, we can ask God to show us His will and be confident that He will answer us. We cannot twist God's arm to be part of our plans. We cannot use God as a token to approve our will. Instead of trying to add God to our plans, we can trust God and allow Him to direct our path.