

DAY 3

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

¹⁰As Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to attack Israel. But the Lord thundered with a mighty sound that day against the Philistines and threw them into confusion, and they were defeated before Israel. ¹¹ And the men of Israel went out from Mizpah and pursued the Philistines and struck them, as far as below Beth-car.

1 Samuel 7: 7-11

...Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

James 4:6

Compared to the Philistines, Israel was the weaker nation. 1 Samuel 4 records the Israelites being defeated in battle by the Philistines twice, and thousands of Israelite soldiers were killed (1 Sam 4:2, 1 Sam 4:10).

When the Philistines saw that the Ark of the Lord had arrived on the battleground, they were afraid (1 Sam 4:8). They had heard about the God of the Israelites, who destroyed the Egyptians with plagues and it motivated them to fight harder. Imagine how strong they would have felt when they slaughtered so many Israelites that day and captured the Ark.

Yet their strength was no match for the living God. When they placed the Ark in the temple of their god, Dagon, the next morning they found the idol of Dagon fallen with his face to the ground in front of the Ark of the Lord. This happened again the next day, except this time the idol's head and hands had broken off and were lying in the doorway (1 Sam 5:3-4). Then the Lord struck the people of Ashdod and the nearby villages with

a plague of tumors, as well as every town the Ark was moved to in Philistia, leaving the Philistines helpless and desperate to send the Ark back to Israel.

Fast forward to when the Israelites gathered at Mizpah. They had repented both inwardly (with their heart) and outwardly (got rid of their idols) and now Samuel was leading them in restoring their relationship with God. The people expressed their sorrow over their sin by fasting and confession.

The Philistines had heard about this gathering and decided it was a good opportunity to bully their weak enemy. Interestingly, even though the Israelites were getting right with God they were intimidated when they heard that the Philistines were approaching. They had been much more confident when their attitude was to use God in the earlier battle (1 Sam 4:5). This is because this time, they were really trusting in the living God. They were no longer in control. They were no longer under the illusion that the Ark would be their lucky charm. They knew their lives were really in God's hand.

Responding to their faith, the Lord fought from heaven on their behalf and defeated the Philistines. He also gave the Israelites the confidence to fight their enemy and share in the victory.

The Philistines initiated an attack on the Israelites because they thought they were weak and vulnerable. Little did they know that this time the Israelites would be victorious because they had put their trust in the Lord.

³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

Romans 8:31

APPLICATION

What does God want me to do?

1 John 1:9 says: *9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

Has the Holy Spirit convicted you of sin, especially one that hinders fellowship with Him? If so, we must confess it and receive forgiveness and cleansing for our relationship with God to continue without hindrance.

PRAYER

Respond to God's Word by writing your prayer.
