

PRECEPTS FOR LIFE
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SERIES: I Samuel, Part 1 (The Heart of a Leader)

FRIDAY

OPEN

Is there anything in your life that you look at and you remember it as a place of victory? Is there anything that you can look at or remember and say hey, that's when the Lord really came to my side? That's when the Lord helped me. That's what Ebenezer means and we're going to look at going from Ichabod, the glory of the Lord has departed to Ebenezer; thus far the Lord has helped.

PART ONE

Well Beloved, we are about to finish 1 Samuel chapter 7. We have come to a very strategic point in the book of 1 Samuel, and you'll see this as you study the content of 1 Samuel chapter 8. But now I want us to return to where we left off. And we left the children of Israel at Mizpah where the Philistines, hearing that they were gathered there decided that they would come and they would wipe out the children of Israel. But the children of Israel were on

deliverance ground. I mean they had done what God had told them to do through Samuel. They had listened to his words. They had followed his advice and they did what was necessary. And in doing so, what you see is you see them going, in a sense, from Ichabod to Ebenezer. Well, let's look first at Ebenezer so that I make sure that this is anchored in your mind. Remember the Philistines now, as they're coming against the children of Israel, the Philistines. Remember now that the sons of Israel have asked Samuel to cry to the Lord so that he can save them from the hands of the Philistines. In verse 10 it says, "Now Samuel was offering up the burnt offering and the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel." Samuel has cried to the Lord and he's telling us now how the Lord answered him. "So Samuel didn't stop offering up the burnt offering. He continued even as the Philistines drew near to battle. But the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day against the Philistines and confused them so that they routed before Israel." Isn't this awesome? All of a sudden I mean there is such a terrible noise from the heavens, that it confuses the Philistines and they just turn around and they lose the battle because God intervenes. Now watch what it says. "And the men of Israel went out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines and struck them down as far as Beth-car. Then Samuel took a stone and set it between Mizpah and Shen, and named it Ebenezer, saying, 'Thus far the Lord has helped us.' Now this is the name of this stone, Ebenezer, the Lord has helped us. It is the Lord that has delivered us." Now when I say that they have gone from Ichabod to Ebenezer, go with me back to the chapter that talks about Ichabod. You say, now wait a minute, let me stop and let me think where that is. And then what you're going to do is you're going to begin to flip the pages and see if you can find that word, if you can find Ichabod, if you marked it. And, and once you find it, then you're going to say, Oh okay I remember what Ichabod is. All right, now we're going to look at Ichabod and then I'm going to show you how to find something quickly in your Bible. I'm going to take you another step in the

inductive study method that is going to help you. Well, Ichabod is mentioned in 1 Samuel chapter 4. And it's mentioned in the time when the Philistines defeated the children of Israel, even though they were scared to death because the ark of the Lord had come into the camp. They were strong and they were courageous and they fought and they defeated Israel. Remember "...the ark of God was taken..." 1 Samuel chapter 4, verse 11, "...and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died." You remember that, "...Phinehas' wife was pregnant..." And when the word came back to where they were that the Philistines had slaughtered them, it says when she was "...about to give birth, and when she heard the news that the ark of God was taken and that her father-in-law and her husband had died, she kneeled down and gave birth, for her pains came upon her. And about at the time of her death the women who stood by her said to her, 'Do not be afraid, for you have given birth to a son.'" In other words your life is going to continue. But she did not answer or pay attention. And she called the boy Ichabod, saying the glory has departed from Israel. That's what Ichabod means: the glory of the Lord has departed. So this is where they have come to now, from the glory of the Lord departing, in 1 Samuel chapter 4 to 1 Samuel chapter 7, which we know is well over 20 years. And now we find "Ebenezer..." (7:12b) What changed their circumstances? Well that's what we've been looking at in these past programs. What changed their circumstances was that they began lamenting for the Lord. They began to miss God. They began to sense that void in their lives, that emptiness, that nothingness, that lack of deep satisfaction. And so they did what was necessary. They did the things that Samuel commanded them to do. And as a result, instead of looking to the ark of the Lord as their deliverance, they cried to God and they saw God help them, and that's why they named the stone, "Ebenezer ... 'Thus far the Lord has helped us.'" You know I think so many times that it helps for us to have a little reminder, something that we can look at that is a means of remembrance of what God

has done or where we've been. I know that as I travel around the world, because Precept Ministries is an international ministry, we have Bible studies in over 119 countries and in about 67 languages. And so I travel around the world. And I bring home little things, not expensive things. I don't bring home expensive things because all my money goes to getting books to these people, because it's the one thing that they ask for and they beg for, is they want books. They want material or they want this program in their language, because they want to study the Word of God and go through it chapter-by-chapter and verse-by-verse and book-by-book. And so I don't bring home anything expensive, but I'll bring home like a teacup or I'll bring home something and I look at it and that in a sense is my reminder. Well what they did was they took a stone and that stone was their Ebenezer. It was a reminder of who had helped them, a reminder of their deliverance. I want you to go for just a minute to Genesis chapter 49, verse 24, and I want to show you something there. That's Genesis 49, verse 24 and I always try and turn to it during the program because I figure then you have time to catch up with me. But in Genesis chapter 49, in verse 24, it's a prophecy that is being given by Jacob to his sons. It's a blessing and a prophecy. And he's talking about Joseph. And this is what it says in verse 24: "But his bow remained firm, and his arms were agile, from the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob, (from there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel.)" So you see that here is the shepherd, here is the stone of Israel. You find Moses referring to God as his rock. You find one of the names of God is Rock; He is our rock. And so they set up a stone. And I think that many times when we have a victory and we see that we have gone from Ichabod, where the glory of the Lord has departed because we have not believed God, because we have not obeyed God, because we have not walked in His way, because we have depended on a religion instead of a relationship, then what we do when we come to that victory, when we come to the realization of our ways, when we come to the reality of our relationship with God and how that's to be the

most important thing in our life, then we set up an Ebenezer. And so what you might think about doing is if you have had a victory, you might go out and get yourself a rock, and on that rock or on that stone just write Ebenezer and then keep it where you're going to see it. And as you look at that stone that says Ebenezer it will remind you that your help comes from God. He is the one that hears your cry. He is the one that is attentive to your needs. And so you go on to verse 13, and it says, "So the Philistines were subdued..." Now watch this. "And they did not come anymore within the border of Israel. And the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel." So you want to put a little clock over the days of Samuel or all the days of Samuel. Because what it tells you is, as long as Samuel was alive, God kept the Philistines at bay. God helped them because they were on deliverance ground, because they did what they were supposed to do. So they went from Ichabod, the glory of the Lord departing to Ebenezer. And Beloved, this ought to be such an encouragement to you because if you feel like the glory of the Lord has departed I can tell you this, He doesn't want to stay away. He wants His glory to rest upon you. He wants you to be seen as a woman of God, as a man of God and He wants to help you in that quest. And that's in part what this program is all about.

PART TWO

Welcome back and as you come back I want you to know that when you're on deliverance ground, when you do what God says and you move from Ichabod to Ebenezer, then God helps you. But He does exceedingly, abundant, above all that we can ask or think. You know, as I look at these next verses I think of Ephesians chapter 3. And I want to take you to Ephesians 3 before we finish 1 Samuel chapter 7. So Ephesians chapter 3. In Ephesians chapter 3, Paul is praying. There are two awesome prayers in the book of Ephesians. And he is praying in verse 17 "that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in

love...,” I mean secure in the love of God, “...may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ, which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.” And that’s what He wants. And in Ephesians chapter 5 he’s going to talk about being filled with the Spirit, which is the fullness of God. And then he makes the statement, “Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us.” (Ephesians 3:20) And that power that works within us is the power that you and I gain through His Spirit. And you can see that in verse 16 when he says “that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Holy Spirit in the inner man.” (Ephesians 3:16) So God is able to do exceeding, abundantly above all that we can ask or think. Well He delivered them in 1 Samuel chapter 7. He delivered them from the Philistines. And they didn’t come anymore within the border of Israel. I mean now that is awesome. But God is not finished. Watch what He does, verse 14. “And the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel....” You know that is so typical of God. He says I will give you the years, I will return to you the years that the locusts have eaten. (Joel 2:25) I will give you beauty for ashes. (Isaiah 61:3) So God is always the God of exceeding abundance. And this is what you see here. When He takes you from Ichabod, the glory of the Lord departing, and He delivers you, and He restores you and the Lord helps you, I mean He doesn’t help you just a little bit; he helps you a whole bunch. And here He’s taking the cities that the Philistines had taken and He is restoring them to Israel, “...from Ekron, even to Gath. And Israel delivered their territory from the hands of the Philistines. So there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.” (1 Samuel 7:14b) Now the Amorites were another enemy. So here is another bonus from God. And Beloved, that’s what happens when you and I lament for the Lord, when you and I are serious about Him, and we pursue Him. You’re

going to find God restoring to you things that you thought that you had lost permanently, things in relationships that you thought you would never have. I stand amazed, so amazed, because you know I didn't come to know Christ until I was 29. And I look back and I stand so amazed at what God has done. And I experience things that I thought were lost dreams, something that would never come to reality. But God is the God of the exceeding abundance above all we can ask or think. Then it says in verse 15 of 1 Samuel 7: "Now Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. And he used to go annually on circuit...." Now can't you imagine oh oh Samuel's coming, Samuel's coming. He went to Bethel. He went to Gilgal. He went to Mizpah "...and he judged Israel in all these places. Then his return was to Ramah, for his house was there. And there he judged Israel and he built there an altar to the Lord." You know there's nothing like home, especially when that home has an altar to the Lord, especially when that home is consecrated to the Lord. Well what do we discover here? We discover that Samuel was not only a prophet, but Samuel was a judge. And we have more to discover in our next program. But remember I told you that there was something that I wanted to show you that we had not done yet. And I purposely waited. We have covered seven chapters of Samuel. Now in covering those seven chapters of Samuel, you want to remember where certain truths are, but you can get confused because Samuel is much longer than seven chapters. As a matter of fact, 1 Samuel is thirty-one chapters long. So you need to make yourself what we call a 1 Samuel, At-A-Glance Chart. Now you don't need to construct how that chart's going to look. All you have to do is download it with our study guide. It's part of our study guide and you just go to preceptsforlife.com. But maybe you didn't look at everything you downloaded, and there is an At-A-Glance Chart, and this is a chart where you write down the theme of every chapter as you study it. And then you record it on this chart so that you can look at that At-A-Glance Chart and have a visual analysis of the content of 1 Samuel. So this is your assignment.

Your assignment is to go through the first seven chapters of 1 Samuel and write down the main theme of that chapter. Choose words that are out of the text. Make it as simple and as short as possible. You don't have to be fancy, but you just need to get down the contents, so that if you want to find something, you can look at where you've listed it under the chapter theme on your At-A-Glance Chart and then go back and find it. So what could you do for chapter 1? Well what is chapter 1 all about? Chapter 1 is all about Hannah asking God for a son and getting Samuel. So anything that has to do with Hannah and Samuel and the birth of that child. When you come to chapter 2 what do you find? You find Hannah's song or prayer and then you find Samuel ministering, but you also find Hophni and Phinehas sinning. Now all of those are important, especially the fact that Samuel is ministering before the Lord, because that's mentioned several times. Also, Hophni and Phinehas' sin is written in this chapter in contrast to this little boy that is ministering to the Lord. So you would come up with something that has to do with that. When you come to chapter 3 what do you find? In chapter 3 this is where God calls Samuel. So Samuel's called by the Lord in this chapter, but he's also confirmed as a prophet. So you would write that down. When you come to chapter 4, what do you have? You have the ark being taken and Eli's sons dying. So then you can put if you wanted to, just to remember it, Ichabod, the ark is taken and Eli's sons die. Then you come to chapter 5 and you find out that the ark brings judgment to the Philistines. You come to chapter 6 and the ark is sent by the Philistines to Beth-shemesh. And then you come to chapter 7 and you see God subduing the Philistines. Well, you can come up with your own theme, but you need to come up with it. And you're going to see something very interesting in our next program. Just remember this Beloved: stay on deliverance ground and God will do exceeding abundantly above all you can ask or think.