

PRECEPTS FOR LIFE

a Production of

Precept Ministries International

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

TUESDAY

OPEN

Have you wondered my friend why the Old Testament is so very thick and why God tells us all these accounts of His people and why He tells us all the words of the prophets? Well they're written there so that you and I can learn from them and not make the same mistakes. And that's what we're going to see as we continue our study in 1 Samuel chapter 6.

PART ONE

Well Beloved, I left in our last program with the Philistines. And if you don't know where the Philistines are, then you need to turn to your study guide and look at that map there on the wanderings of the ark and you will see it's in the area of Gaza and Ashkelon and Ashdod and Gath and Ekron. As a matter of fact, the ark was at Ekron and this is Philistine territory. And what I want you to see and understand is that territory exists today. And of course you know about Gaza, because it's always in the news and because there's always some sort of turmoil going on there. Well there was turmoil

going on there in the days of Samuel, and we want to look at that. And by the way, if you have not logged on and downloaded the study guide on 1 Samuel you need to that. You can go to preceptsforlife.com and there you can download it. Or if you're having problems or want to talk to us about anything, call 1-800-763-1990, that's 1-800-763-1990. Remember we are here for you, Beloved. We are here because we want you to understand God's Word. Why? Because these are precepts for life, and those things that happened a long time ago happened as examples for us so that you and I can learn from them. Now normally when I tell you something like that I take you to Romans, chapter 15, but today I want to take you for just one quick minute to 1 Corinthians, chapter 10. And in 1 Corinthians, chapter 10 in verses 1 thru 10 he's talking about the children of Israel. And he's warning us that we're not to be idolaters as some of them were, and we're not to act immorally, as some of them did, and we're not to try the Lord as some of them did, or grumble as some of them did. And it goes on to say in verse 11: "Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the end of the ages has come." And so it says, "Therefore, let him who thinks he stand take heed lest he fall." In other words, pay attention to the lessons in God's Word because they're precepts for life. So in 1 Samuel, chapter 6 where I left you, we want to pick up at verse 6. Now remember they had this plague that had come upon them, and it sounds like it was a bubonic plague. And we dealt with that in our last program, and if you didn't get that you do want to listen to it, because there's nothing new under the sun. They wanted to appease God and so they were advised to make likenesses of their tumors and likenesses of the mice that ravaged the land, and then make these likenesses and send them back to God. And as they're giving this advice to the Philistines, he makes this interesting statement: "Why then do you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? When He...", and it's speaking of God, "...had severely dealt with them? Did they not allow the people to go and they departed?" In other words listen; God is upset with us. And you better do something to appease this God. Don't be like these Egyptians. Don't be

like that stubborn Pharaoh that said I'm not going to let the people go. Learn a lesson from history. And so God wants you and I to learn a lesson from history today. And that lesson from history is this, that God is in charge and He rules over all, and He's over every calamity. So any time a calamity comes or you find yourself in a difficult spot, you need to go to God and find out why am I here. Now you may be there because God is judging you and there's sin in your life and God wants to get your attention. Or you may be there because God is going to use you as an example in that situation and He's going to use you to show others hey, the grace of God is sufficient. Or you maybe in that situation simply because God wants to refine you even more and bring you into greater Christ likeness; but you have to find out why am I here. So this is the advice now that the priests and the diviners gave to the Philistines. They said, "Now therefore, take and prepare a cart..." verse 7, "...and two milch cows on which there has never been a yoke; and hitch the cows to the cart and take their calves home, away from them. And take the ark of the Lord and place it on the cart; and put the articles of gold, which you return to Him as a guilt offering in a box by its side." Not inside the ark, but beside the ark. Now remember those are going to be five golden tumors and they're going to be five golden mice, according to the number of the lords of the Philistines. All right now, he says, "[Put them beside them], then send it away that it may go. And watch; if it goes by the way of its own territory to Beth-shemesh, then He has done this great evil." If, in other words you take these things, you put them on the cart beside the ark, and when you put two cows in that yoke and they've never been a yoke before, so they don't know how to work in a yoke and you've got to have ones that have calves, and you take their babies away from them, and you put them on the road, and they take the path towards Beth-shemesh, then you can know, hey, this is God, because this is not normal, because milk cows that have never been in a yoke are not going to work together well and they're going to pull against one another. You take away their babies, they're going to go after their babies, and you'll know if it's God if the ark gets where we're sending it. He says, "But if not then we shall know

that it was not His hand that struck us; it happened to us by chance. Then the men did so, and took two milch cows and hitched them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home. And they put the ark of the Lord on the cart and the box with the golden mice and the likeness of their tumors. And the cows took the straight way in the direction of Beth-shemesh.” (6:9b-12a) I mean those men were standing there with their eyes glued on this ark and these cows to see what happened. And it says, “The cows took the straight way in the direction of Beth-shemesh; and they went along the highway, lowing as they went.” In other words they were probably crying ‘cause they missed their little calves. But “they did not turn aside to the right or to the left. And the lords of the Philistines followed them to the border of Beth-shemesh. Now the people of Beth-shemesh were reaping with their wheat harvest in the valley, and they raised their eyes and saw the ark and they were glad to see it.” Because this is a Jewish town and they see this most holy piece of furniture being returned to them and they are just absolutely awed. Now listen, the Philistines know hey, this was God. This plague came from God because we took the Ark of the Covenant. Now they had had evidence before that, and they had evidence when they took that ark of God and brought it into the house of Dagon and then got up the next morning and found Dagon on his face and then they set him back up, and the next day they go in and they find him with his head lopped off and both of the palms of his hands cut off and only the trunk of Dagon lying there on the floor, and they could have known then. But they were bound and determined that they were going to keep that ark, and, and then they found out God’s hand has come severely on you, and at least they were smart enough, now listen; these are heathen people. And they were smart enough to find out is this God? What is God trying to tell us? Is this a coincidence or is this God? And Beloved, I would tell you that in any situation of life, no matter how difficult, no matter what a pain in the neck it is, that you just stop and that you seek God, and you say God, is this You? Are You trying to tell me something? God, what are you trying to teach me? Because nothing comes into your life Beloved, but what it’s filtered through fingers of love. A

sovereign God that sits on His throne rules over every situation of your life. And in every situation of your life He is working in order to conform you into the image of Jesus Christ. Well, when the cart gets to Beth-shemesh then the people are so excited, that it says that “the cart comes, stops, and stood where there was a large stone; and they split the wood of the cart; they offered the cows as a burnt offering to the Lord. And the Levites took down the ark of the Lord and the box that was in it, in which were the articles of gold and put them on the large stone and the men of Beth-shemesh offered burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices that day to the Lord. And when the five lords of the Philistines saw it they returned to Ekron that day. And these are the golden tumors, which the Philistines returned for a guilt offering to the Lord: one for Ashdod, now these are the cities of the Philistines, one for Gaza, one for Ashkelon, one for Gath and one for Ekron.” (6:14-17) It’s all there on your map. “And the golden mice, according to the numbers of the cities of the Philistines belonging to the five lords, both of fortified cities and of country villages. The large stone...,” now listen, this is so important. “...The large stone on which they set the ark of the Lord is a witness to this day in the field of Joshua the Beth-shemite. And He struck down, God stuck down some of the men of Beth-shemesh.” (6:18-19a) Why? Because they had looked into the ark of the Lord. Do you remember that movie, Raiders of the Lost Ark? I wonder where they got that concept from? We’ll talk about it when we come back.

PART TWO

I’m sure by now that you have seen Raiders of the Lost Ark. I mean it was purely entertaining. But when I went to see the movie I want you to know that I was expecting a biblical movie. And I was expecting a biblical movie because when it first came out I was on a flight and I was witnessing to a little girl that was playing in the aisle of the airplane. And as I talked to her and everything, and just sharing Jesus Christ with her, because when you share with a child then the adults often listen. Her aunt said to me, O she

said, I want to ask you a question. She says do you remember in the Bible when they opened the Ark of the Covenant and people died as a result of that? I said yes. And she said do you know where it is? I learned never again will I pack my whole Bible. You know, I may have a New Testament on me, but I'm always going to have an Old Testament on me. And I said, you know what darling, I cannot remember where it is, but if you will give me your address I will write and send you where that passage is. Well that's what I did. To make a long story a little bit longer; then it was the days when I was wearing these glue on individual false eyelashes, because they thought I would look better on television that way. I just got word for you girls; don't do it. It ruins your eyelashes. I mean it changed the hairline of my eyelashes and everything and brother, when I took them off, I mean I looked like a plucked chicken, and a plucked chicken doesn't look good. But anyway, I was sitting there and this gal was gluing on my eyelashes. She was not a believer. She was a dear friend and she said, she said, "Did you see that movie?" And I said, "No, what movie?" She said, "Oh, the movie about the ark, when they opened the ark." And she says you've got to see it. So I called my friend Jan Silvius, and our boys were young in those days. And I said Jan; we've got to go see this movie. It's a religious movie and it's about the Ark of the Covenant and two people have told me about it so it must be good, so we've got to go. So we gather our kids; we go to a local thing. And I think I'm going to see a religious movie. We sit down front and all of a sudden that big stone ball comes rolling and everything and I'm watching Harrison Ford in this purely entertaining movie about the Ark of the Covenant, and the Raiders of the Lost Ark. Now when you read that you realize hey, somebody's been in the Bible. And being in the Bible what they have done is they have picked up some interesting facts about the Ark of the Covenant and they have woven it into a very clever and a very entertaining story. Well, in 1 Samuel what happens was when the Ark of the Covenant gets to the Jewish people and it's been put on a cart by the Philistines. The ark was never to be carried that way, and yet God, knowing all of this protects the Philistines, but He is about to judge the Jews because they're

doing something that they know that's written in the Law, and if they had read the Law they would have known it, that they were never supposed to do. They were forbidden to touch that ark. They were absolutely forbidden to touch it and they were forbidden to look at it. No one except from the tribe of Levi would have anything to do with the furniture in the temple, and then only those of the Aaronic priesthood could do certain things. And when things were moved they had to be moved in a certain way. They had to be covered so that the eyes of the men, some of the Levites would not look upon the ark, because this was a holy piece of furniture that represented the throne of God. So what they do is they look into the ark of God. And it says, "And He struck down some of the men of Beth-shemesh..." and this is verse 19 of 1 Samuel 6, "...because..." and I would circle: "...because they had looked into the ark of the Lord." Now if you followed our instructions you've marked every reference to the ark of the Lord. Now watch what it says: "He struck down all the people, 50,070 men, and the people mourned because the Lord had struck the people with a great slaughter." (6:19b) Now if you have an NIV version, they've changed the number. And they've changed the number because they think it couldn't have been that much. It is a textural error or it is an exaggeration, and yet, I want you to see something. I want you to go back to 1 Samuel, chapter 4, verse 10, 1 Samuel, chapter 4, verse 10. The Philistines are in a battle with the Israelites and you know that the Israelites lose this battle and the ark of God is taken and Eli's sons Hophni and Phinehas are put to death. You know all that. We've studied it. We've marked it. You're learning the Word and I'm so proud of you. But verse 10 says: "So the Philistines fought and Israel was defeated and every man fled to his tent, and the slaughter was very great, for there fell of Israel, thirty thousand foot soldiers." Could it have been that all the people that gathered as a result of this were really 50,070 men and that the Lord was showing them, hey, you better fear Me instead of the Philistines? The Philistines only killed 30,000 of you; I've killed 50,070 of you because you did not honor Me as God. You see when you read the Old Testament one of the things you discover is the holiness of God. You develop a fear of God, a

respect of God, a trust of God, an honoring of God. And the men of Bethshemesh learned their lesson, and this is what they said: “Who is able to stand before the Lord, this holy God? And to whom shall He go up from us?” In other words, what are we going to do with this ark? We’re in the presence of a holy God, and who is able to stand in His presence? And this is the question that you and I need to answer in our hearts. Who is able to stand before the Lord, this holy God? And the one that’s able to stand is the one that has clean hands. It’s the one that has a pure heart, as the psalm says. Only those can really approach a holy God. And so they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kiriath-jearim, saying the Philistines have brought back the ark of the Lord; come down and take it up to you. In other words, we don’t want it here, because we can’t stand in the presence of this holy God. Now they could have had an incredible blessing if they had feared God so much that they would have stopped and said, God, we realize that this happened because we did not honor You as God. And now we’re going to honor You as God and when we honor You as God we’re going to ask You to bless us. You know you come to the book of Zechariah and this is where I take people on our tours, and I tell them hey, I’m going to show you what it’s like at Raiders of the Lord. I said you know that they got this from Zechariah, chapter 12. And it talks about a plague that is going to come upon all the people who go to war against Jerusalem. And their flesh rots while they stand on their feet and their eyes rot in their sockets and their tongue rots in their mouth, and it’s because they did not honor God as God. O Beloved, in any circumstance of life you need to bow the knee and you need to say sovereign God, show me how I am to live, what do you want to teach me and then do it. Live accordingly Beloved.