



## PURSUING

## WITHOUT GOD

**1 Samuel 4:1-2**, *And the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out to battle against the Philistines. They encamped at Ebenezer, and the Philistines encamped at Aphek. The Philistines drew up in line against Israel, and when the battle spread, Israel was defeated before the Philistines, who killed about four thousand men on the field of battle. [ESV]*

- ✳ **The word of Samuel came to all Israel** - Samuel is the prophet to consult at this time of renewal
- ✳ **The battle spread** - separation and isolation from community makes us vulnerable to attack
- ✳ **Battle #1, four thousand killed** - significant loss impacting every Jewish town and community

**1 Samuel 4:3-4**, *And when the people came to the camp, the elders of Israel said, "Why has the LORD defeated us today before the Philistines? Let us bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD here from Shiloh, that it may come among us and save us from the power of our enemies." So the people sent to Shiloh and brought from there the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, who is enthroned on the cherubim. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God. [ESV]*

- ✳ **Problem: Why has the LORD defeated us today** is the right question for a perplexing and tragic outcome that reveals a problem
- ✳ **Solution: Bring the ark of the covenant** reveals faith in an object (the box) rather than the God of the covenant that the box symbolizes
- ✳ **Disconnect: Hophni and Phinehas'** lives and priestly ministries dishonored what the ark represented

**1 Samuel 4:5-7**, *As soon as the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel gave a mighty shout, so that the earth resounded. And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shouting, they said, "What does this great shouting in the camp of the Hebrews mean?" And when they learned that the ark of the LORD had come to the camp, the Philistines were afraid, for they said, "A god has come into the camp." And they said, "Woe to us! For nothing like this has happened before." [ESV]*

- ✳ **Question: What does this great shout in the camp mean?** The Hebrews trust the physical box for power more than a focus on the God who gave the box as a symbol to help them keep focused
- ✳ **Response: The Philistines were afraid** because in polytheistic thinking the idol contained the god
- ✳ **Change: Woe to us! For nothing like this has happened before** reveals a perceived shift of power after the first victory that could change the outcome of the next battle. This new factor intimidated them.

**1 Samuel 4:8-9**, *Woe to us! Who can deliver us from the power of these mighty gods? These are the gods who struck the Egyptians with every sort of plague in the wilderness. Take courage, and be men, O Philistines, lest you become slaves to the Hebrews as they have been to you; be men and fight." [ESV]*

- \* **Assessment:** The Philistines had common knowledge of the Hebrew victory over the Egyptian army, which led them to believe there was no power that they could access to overcome the Hebrew gods
- \* **Motivations to overcome:** 1) be courageous men, and 2) avoid becoming slaves

## SEEKING OUR OWN \_\_\_\_\_ WITHOUT GOD

**1 Samuel 4:10-11,** *So the Philistines fought, and Israel was defeated, and they fled, every man to his home. And there was a very great slaughter, for thirty thousand foot soldiers of Israel fell. And the ark of God was captured, and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died. [ESV]*

- \* **Battle #2, Defeated...fled...a very great slaughter** of 30,000 soldiers (over 7 times more casualties)
- \* **Outcomes:** 1) The ark of God is captured, and 2) Hophni and Phinehas' death fulfills 2:34 & 3:12, which reveals God's sovereign power, providential planning, and holy purposes

## STRUGGLING TO SEE THE \_\_\_\_\_ ABOUT RELIGION WITHOUT GOD

**1 Samuel 4:13, 18,** *When he arrived, Eli was sitting on his seat by the road watching, for his heart trembled for the ark of God....As soon as he [the runner] mentioned the ark of God, Eli fell over backward from his seat by the side of the gate, and his neck was broken and he died, for the man was old and heavy. He had judged Israel forty years. [ESV]*

- \* **Eli's heart trembled for the ark of God** since he knew the prophecy about his boys death and cessation of his legacy. See 2:29-34 and 3:10-14. Consequences sometimes confirm our regrets. Eli's death shows God's providential plan to stop the hemorrhaging of evil within the priesthood and begin anew with Samuel.

**1 Samuel 4:19-22,** *Now his daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, was pregnant, about to give birth. And when she heard the news that the ark of God was captured, and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she bowed and gave birth, for her pains came upon her. And about the time of her death the women attending her said to her, "Do not be afraid, for you have borne a son." But she did not answer or pay attention. And she named the child Ichabod, saying, "The glory has departed from Israel!" because the ark of God had been captured and because of her father-in-law and her husband. And she said, "The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured." [ESV]*

- \* **Eli's daughter-in-law** sees the despair of living outwardly religious lives, yet inwardly distant from God
- \* She names her child **Ichabod**, which means "without glory", "the glory is gone" from Israel, or inglorious
- \* What we really need is more of God's enriching greatness, goodness and guidance in our lives!

### Adjustments for the Problem of Drift:

- R\_\_\_\_\_ on God rather than religious symbols
- R\_\_\_\_\_ God's intervention and correction for important change
- R\_\_\_\_\_ regrets as a means to new insight about a closer relationship with God and treating others right