

Why God's People Experience Defeat

And what we do about it – 1 Samuel 4:1a-22

Main Idea: Hypocritical religion guarantees defeat. Attention to God's glory prevents it.

1. THE REALITY OF DEFEAT – When we act according to the principles of the world, our behavior is will catch up with us. 1 Samuel 4:1a-2; 10-11; 12-17

- A. The first thing we see is that this passage is all about defeat.
 - 1. It begins in defeat: Israel loses 4,000 people in battle. 4:2
 - 2. It ends in defeat: Israel loses 30,000. 4:10-11a
 - 3. One of the things we need to realize is that sometimes Christians face horrible setbacks.
- B. The problem with seasons of defeat is that sometimes the future is very unclear.
 - 1. We see this with the removal of the Ark. 4:11a
 - 2. We see this with the death of Hophni and Phinehas. 4:11b
 - 3. We see this with the death of Eli. 4:12-17
- C. When we act according to the world, defeat is going to be a reality.
 - 1. We see this in some obvious ways with addictive behaviors.
 - 2. We see this in some not so obvious ways with expectations.

2. THE REASONS FOR DEFEAT – There are two main reasons for defeat. 1 Samuel 4:3-9

- A. When we act arrogantly against God, we will experience defeat. *They do four things in verses 3-5.*
 - 1. First, they blame God. 4:3a
 - 2. Second, they use God for their own ends, “fetching” the ark. 4:3b-4
 - 3. Third, they whip themselves up in the energy of the flesh. 3:5
 - 4. Third, they enter battle without prayer. (Remember Deut. 20 and Josh. 9.)
- B. When we live hypocritical Christian lives, we will experience defeat. 4:6-9
 - 1. God calls his people to express who he is before the watching world. Dt. 6:4; 1 Pet. 2:13
 - 2. Israel failed to do this.
 - 3. So the Philistines think that Israel is polytheistic. 4:8
 - 4. The Philistines are mad and they're going into battle. 4:9
- C. How this applies to us.
 - 1. When you are religious without reality, you're going to make some bad decisions.
 - 2. When you are religious without reality, you're going to make some people angry.

3. THE REMEDY TO DEFEAT – We must rekindle our passion for the glory of God. 1 Samuel 4:19-22

- A. One person in Israel gets it. Phinehas' wife. But she's a woman in pain.
 - 1. Her husband is a glutton (2:29) and unfaithful (2:22).
 - 2. Her extended family is dysfunctional. 2:25
 - 3. She has no name.
 - 4. But she develops a passion for the glory of God.
- B. Phinehas' wife declares her priorities in death.
 - 1. She goes into labor. Things go badly. She's at the point of death. The midwives comfort.
 - 2. She declares her commitment to God's glory.
- C. This is the thing that is true of these people: It's all about God's glory.
 - 1. Think about the following verses about God's glory.
 - 2. What would it mean for you to live for his glory?