

Showing Forth the Glory of God

1 Samuel 4

Introduction:

1. This chapter is a sad portion of God's Word. It is a chapter of dismay, depression, defeat, and despondency.
2. Israel (God's people) loses 34,000 men in battle against their enemy, Israel's spiritual leader (Eli) and his two sons die, and the chapter ends with a mother dying as she gives birth to her son.
3. The baby is given the name "Ichabod." This name means *"The glory is departed."* Let's read verses 20-22.
4. In the Old Testament, the glory of God had to do with God's presence and God's power being evident and visible among the Israelites. God's power and presence were absent in the affairs of this chapter, so the mother names this child Ichabod (the glory is departed).
5. What is the glory of God today (in this time of grace), and how is it manifested? A few key verses will explain
 - John 1:14 - Christ was the living, fleshly embodiment and manifestation of God's glory.
 - 2 Thessalonians 2:14 - When people trust Christ, they obtain God's glory, and Christ's Spirit comes to live within them. Colossians 1:27
 - 2 Corinthians 3:18 - Christ's Spirit transforms or changes us so that we begin to reflect God's glory. That is, we reflect Christ in all that we do. His glory is demonstrated **through us**.
6. But, here is the sad part: Just as God's glory could not be seen in Israel, many times believers fail to show forth the glory of God in their daily lives. Christ is not seen.
 - "Ichabod" could be written on their foreheads. They are surrounded by a cloud of bitterness, despondency, or defeat. The light of Christ in them has been hidden.
7. But the good part is that it doesn't have to be this way. Nobody should ever have to stamp on our heads "Ichabod." Every believer can show forth the glory of Christ in them. How?

First, by always trusting God, not things, for our victory. vs. 1-10

1. Israel battled the Philistines and got whipped. Four thousand men were killed, and the Israelites went back to camp like dogs with their tails between their legs. vs. 2
2. How did Israel respond to this defeat? First, they blamed God (vs. 3a). Mark it down, when we start blaming God for adverse circumstances, we will never reflect the glory of Christ, but that old bitter spirit of Ichabod will take over.
3. Then Israel made another key mistake. Instead of seeking God and asking Him for victory, they went to fetch the Ark of the Covenant (vs. 3b-5). What was this? It was basically a portable chest, the most important sacred object of the Israelites.

- It was the only piece of furniture in the innermost room of Moses' tabernacle, called the Holy of Holies. It was the place where God spoke to Moses.
 - When it was carried by Israel into the Jordan River, the waters parted. When carried by the Israelites around Jericho, the walls fell to the ground.
4. So, the Israelites made a superstitious, religious relic out of the ark and turned to the "magic power" of this wooden box rather than turning to God. The result? vs. 10-11
 5. What do we learn from this? If we are going to reflect the glory of our Savior, we had better have our faith and trust in Him, not things.
 - Apply to salvation - Just as Israel trusted the ark to save them, many people do the same thing, today, in regards to their eternal souls (an emblem of the cross, a statue, jewelry, the mystical waters of baptism, the church they joined). If we are trusting things to save us, we are in deep trouble. Salvation from our sins is found in a Person. Galatians 3:26
 - Apply to the Christian walk - It is so easy to become like the Israelites and think that because we go to a good church, or hand out tracts, or wear Christian T-shirts, or read Christian books, that we are reflecting Christ's glory. But, we must look in faith to Christ each and every moment of each day. It is all about a walk with Him. Colossians 2:6-7; 2 Corinthians 4:10; Philippians 4:13

Second, by keeping a holy fear of sin. vs. 11-19

1. The nation of Israel was in a state of total spiritual apathy and sinful rebellion. As this book opens, every man is doing whatever he wants to do (Judges 21:25), and Israel's leaders were corrupt. They are mentioned in verse 11.
2. These were the two sons of Eli. "*They knew not the Lord*" (2:12), and they were steeped in sin and wickedness (2:22-24). They had absolutely no fear of sin. 2:25
3. Eli, their father, patronized them and allowed them to continue to make a complete mockery of God's laws and God's ways. God had warned Eli (through Samuel) that judgment would come (2:34). Just as God had promised, their sin was finally judged and dealt with.
 - Two young men's lives snuffed out prematurely. Why? Because of sin.
4. But the consequences of their sin went even further than themselves.
 - The ark of God is captured by the heathen Philistines. This would impact the nation.
 - Their father falls over in grief and dies. Read vs. 12-18.
 - Phinehas' wife dies in childbirth, and that child would now be raised as an orphan with no mom or dad. vs. 19-21
5. Here is the principle: No matter how rich, educated, or famous you are, sin will always catch up with you, and it always carries with it consequences. It starts out like a kitty cat and turns into a ravaging, vicious lion. Song: *Sin Will Take You Farther*
6. It doesn't matter which dispensation you live in. All throughout the Bible we are warned that sin destroys and tears down; it never edifies.

7. There is no way that we can display the glory of Christ when we are involved in sin and disobedience against God. In fact, the Bible clearly teaches that we grieve and quench the Spirit of Christ within us when we sin. Ephesians 4:30-31
8. Should a believer in this time of grace possess a holy fear of God and sin? Paul taught the church that we should. Romans 6:15; 2 Corinthians 7:1; 1 Corinthians 9:27, 15:34; Romans 6:12, 16
9. Many people try to convince themselves that God does not see nor care about their sin, but Numbers 32:23 states, "*...ye have sinned against the Lord: and be sure your sin will find you out.*" Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:10-11a, "*For we must all appear....*"
10. My friend, God has only one answer for sin, and that answer is Jesus Christ. If you are lost today and you do not know Christ as your Savior, please know that nothing will atone for your sin except what Christ has done for you on the cross. You must look in faith to Him.
11. Christian, never take sin lightly, and never underestimate its consequences. Avoid it like you would a rattlesnake or an angry dog. Again, our only answer for sin is Jesus Christ. Through our faith in Him we are delivered from sin's eternal punishment, but through our daily walk of faith in Christ, we are delivered from sin's power and deadly consequences.

In Conclusion:

1. Maybe you are here today and know deep down that you have not been showing forth the glory of Christ that dwells within you. Like a lamp that is covered, you have hidden the glory of Christ within you. May this portion of God's Word challenge your heart today.
2. Maybe you are here today and you are not sure that the glory of Christ even lives within you. Did you know that Christ will gladly come and take up residence in your heart today? Turn to Jesus today in faith and trust Him as your personal Savior.