

# One Only

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[ 0 : 00 ] Thank you both for your prayer. And turn back to the passage that we read together in 1 Samuel chapter 7. And we'll read it verse 3.

And Samuel said to the house of Israel, If ye are returning to the Lord with all your heart, put away the foreign gods and the ashtoreth from among you, and direct your heart to the Lord and serve him only.

And he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines. So the people of Israel put away the Baals and the ashtoreth, and they served the Lord only.

In a sense, I want to carry on just the time that we have, just carry on from where we left off on Sunday night. And we were in chapter 5 and 6 there.

And previously, we had seen that the nation of Israel had gone to war on their own terms, for their own desires to be free from the Philistines. And then we found out that they lost the Ark, as they brought the Ark of God into battle, by their own reasonings.

[ 1 : 17 ] And they lost it, the Philistines over Canaan. The Ark ended up in the land of the Philistines. And we saw how God revealed himself to both his own people and to the Philistines.

And we thought of God and his characteristics using the fourth catechism. God was that spirit, infinite, eternal, unchangeable. And in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.

And you could spend as much time as you want thinking about God and trying to understand him. And we kind of get enriched as we do that.

We are encouraged by the awesomeness of who God is. And in a sense, we can't understand truly who he is. He is incomprehensible. I want to look now at the passage that we have where the people come back to God.

And catechism five fits in well with our thoughts as well, which is, are there more gods than one? And the answer is, there is but one only, the living and true God.

[ 2 : 31 ] I'm not sure how far this method will carry on through Samuel, but I thought it just fits so well. That's what Samuel is saying to the people. Remember, come back to the Lord.

God. God. Worship the Lord only. And it's a fundamental teaching. And you might sit there and be thinking, well, this is all something that we believe.

Of course we do as Christians. We believe that God is one. God is the only Lord of our lives. But there is much for us to learn from this, as much as to remind ourselves of who God is.

And we often need reminders because we often forget the basics. We often get carried away in our lives, even if it's in our Christian lives. And this passage was to Israel, the Lord's chosen people. And we are the Lord's people. And it was said before them to put away all other gods and worship the Lord only, directing our hearts.

[ 3 : 49 ] And certainly we as a people must adhere to that as well. We must agree with that, to direct our hearts to the Lord and to serve him only.

And he will be a God that will deliver you. And in the people of Israel, who had gone their own way, they had gone into battle, they had disrespected God's presence of the ark.

There's a change of thought here in the people. There's a redirection in their understanding of who God is. As God revealed who he was, they began to understand, what have we done?

This God is that power, wisdom, holiness. He is a just God. He is good. And he is a true God. And he has become all the more true to them.

True enough that they would change their minds and change their direction. So there is a redirection. And there is a deliverance that we see in the passage. So we'll just pick up on these points of a redirection and a deliverance that comes to them as they come back to God.

[ 5 : 13 ] Verse 2 tells us that a long time has passed. It says in the middle there of verse 2, 20 years have passed. But there was, after having this, all of a sudden, God had acted before the Philistines.

He had declared who he was. And then you've got this almost silence for 20 years where nothing happens. There's no divine interruption from God like we saw in the last chapter.

But there's a change that we see that Israel lamented after the Lord. Samuel saw the people had gained this understanding of who God was.

He was seeing them lamenting after the Lord. And he came to them. And they were, you know, they were a people, remember they were a people of chapter 6.

He said, this God is a holy God who can stand, who can stand in his presence. They were beginning to understand. And Samuel comes to them now and he's saying, if you are returning to the Lord with all your heart, then put away the foreign gods.

[ 6 : 31 ] And he's saying, this redirection, it requires devotion, complete devotion. And God asks for a whole heart. As he had always done when he revealed himself to the people of Israel in Deuteronomy, chapter 6, verse 4, God says to the people, hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might.

He is one that we must devote ourselves to entirely as one. This is a, this is a, this is a, this is called the Shema in the Jewish tradition.

And this is a prayer that the Jewish people will pray daily to remind themselves who God is. The Lord is one.

So it does us entirely beneficial for us just to think about more on who God is as that one being. and our love to God.

[ 7 : 44 ] It should never, it should never be divided. And that's our ideal. We don't want to divide our love to God, but we admit that we fail, we fail to keep that devotion.

We want, as the Lord's people, the people who are chosen by him, we want to be near to God. We want to, we want to know as much of God as we can by what he has revealed to us.

We want, we want to feel the strength of God. And when our love and our devotion and our hearts are torn in another direction, we, we lose that ideal.

And, and we all do it. We all want as much of God when we come to understand who he is, but we admit that something else gets in the way.

We, we, we separate ourselves from God. We have our idols in a sense like Israel. And, you know, in my bedroom, there's a, it's like a three pane window.

[ 8 : 53 ] There's one big one in the middle and two on the side. So, you know, if I took the things in my life and we can all do it and I'm speaking to myself every time I look at the word of God, you know, we can have these idols and things that we place higher than we should in our lives.

And I was thinking it would be like a, it would be like a different colored paper for different things.

You know, if it was football or cars or whatever it would be, houses or, or carrier and we can have all these different colored papers that we place in our lives and when we put them on, it restricts the light coming through the window.

And if our, if our lives was the room, then, then we are putting these things in between ourselves and the source of light, God.

And, and maybe what we do is like, I was thinking, I probably cover up the two side panes and I leave the main pane in the middle clear.

I let the light in and that is my, my main window, as it were, in my life. This is main central pane.

[ 10 : 12 ] But I've got all this stuff on the side that restricts even greater light coming in. And we as Christians need to clear our lives from these idols or these things that we elevate into positions that they shouldn't be there.

We all, we are all tempted and the devil will throw paper at us and, and we just automatically put them on because we love them so much and we love to see them in our lives.

But even then, when we, we place these things before us, the light comes through them. They're all from God in a sense. Everything we have is from God.

And behind all these things, light shines. But if we reduce that light in, within us, we've spoken, we've prayed about ones that would radiate the light.

And God has put in gifts within each of us. And if we restrict that light within ourselves, we don't, the light doesn't flood into the room as it should.

[ 11 : 27 ] It doesn't flood into our lives. The word of God should flood into our lives as much as we can receive from God. That's our ideal, that we see as much of God and the beauty of God as that light comes upon us.

And as we say, God creates us and God gifts us. And it's like as if there were jewels in the room that God has placed within our lives.

And as the light of God comes in, people will see these jewels that will reflect out the glory of God from us. us. So we, in a sense, need to have the redirection that Israel had.

We need to come back to God and lament over the things that are in our lives that we place on the side windows. Maybe we're keeping them, maybe what the world are doing is covering the whole window and restricting their view of God entirely and saying he's not there.

But we as Christians, maybe we're clutching up the sides and we're not allowing God in as much as we should. We need to put these things, we need to have redirection, we need to remind ourselves every day, the Lord, our God, the Lord is one and one that is worthy of one entire devotion from us.

[ 12 : 57 ] He is one that we must concentrate on as one and give all that we can to. there are things in our lives that we shouldn't keep and we just need to put them away, things that are not good for us.

We just need to put them away. Israel delighted to have the ark returned to them after 20 years, but they still held on to the gods.

They were delighted to have the ark returned to them, but they still held on to their gods for 20 years. Samuel is saying to them, put them away, get rid of these gods, clear the window and let the light of the Lord your God enter into your hearts.

the Lord is a jealous God and he will not be worshipped alongside any other. He is the one and only, he is living and he is true.

And this redirection as we see in the people, it comes with a confession of our error, confessions of our sins as we see the people doing in verse 6.

[ 14 : 11 ] We have sinned against the Lord. we have sinned against the Lord. But if we look at our lives and we see these side windows cluttered, we say we have sinned against the Lord.

But he is one that if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us them and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1 verse 9. we confess all of these things and bring them before and we lament over them and we confess we have sinned, he will cleanse us, which is something we struggle to grasp here, that he will cleanse us.

And our redirection, we as our people must direct ourselves to the Lord entirely, to that light. so let's look at the deliverance that the people have in this passage as well.

People confess their sins and Samuel, in a sense, he's like an intercessor for them on their behalf. The situation that they have, they've gathered at Mishpana, it's turned on its head when Israel are faced with the threat of the Philistines.

[ 15 : 34 ] the Philistines reappear in this passage again. And just as it took 20 years for Israel to return to the Lord, it took 20 years for the Philistines to forget about the power that God had before them in the ark.

It's interesting what time can do to us as people. It reads that they came against Israel in verse 7. Israel feared this nation was gathered not for battle, they were gathered to devote themselves and return themselves to the Lord.

They didn't have any armory, they didn't have any weapons to fight the Philistines as they came, but the Philistines are probably and they understand to be a strong nation.

There's chariots and irons with the strength of iron, far stronger than Israel. So they had a right to fear that they're trapped, they're gathered together and this threat is coming upon them.

[ 16 : 41 ] In every sense of the word, they've lost. There's a prospect that they are losing this and you can't help but wonder what are they thinking?

They came before the Philistines, before they defeated them and they went back to the ark in the previous passages. what are they going to do? Where are they going to go?

Will they find confidence in themselves again to go against the Philistines? They don't. Maybe they're just in a position where they're completely at ends for themselves. like we cannot do anything. We are, we have lost. And so they cry out to Samuel, do not cease to cry out for us.

We can do nothing for ourselves. They've come to devote themselves to the Lord and they're trusting that God will free them.

[ 17 : 46 ] The Lord will be faithful to them. And they rely upon him. some people may portray the Christian life that, you know, when you become a Christian, it's easy.

God's on your side and you'll have no problems, you'll have no anxieties whatsoever, which is not, which is not true. Many people as Christians go through very difficult circumstances.

And even when we stand for God, as this deal we're doing here, they are making us stand for God. We can be sure that the devil will not be far away.

We can be sure that there will be a test awaiting us. When we devote our lives like Israel did, they came with their hearts to devote them to Israel.

We can be sure that there will be something to challenge us in our lives. Maybe you can think back when you became a Christian.

[ 18 : 49 ] Things that were thrown thrown in your way, things that came before you, that made you question, well, am I on the right path? Is it going to be this difficult all the way?

And we can start in our faith and we can think that, well, I don't have the strength to do it. I can't go on, I can't go on in my faith.

there's no way I can do this. But God shows himself to be faithful as he did to the people. God was their protector.

They trusted in God and God left them in awe at what he did. There's no doubt that God surprised them by the means of his protection.

Verse 10 tells us that the Lord thundered a mighty sound and threw the Philistines into confusion. Maybe the world will come against us in a certain way.

[ 19 : 51 ] But when the world go their own way, there's a confusion. It was mentioned in prayer. Confusion rules in a people I forget about God. But when we remember God, he will clearly direct us.

And he gave the people who trusted in him a strength and ability to overcome the challenges that were set before him.

He gave them the ability and the strength to overcome the challenges that were set before them as a nation. It seemed that everything was against them and they were defeated already. But God was faithful to him.

They asked, do not cease to cry out for us. And God is one who will not turn out prayer from him and will not withhold his grace from me.

Psalms 66. And maybe, well, maybe they would have been so relieved. God has been faithful.

[ 21 : 02 ] God has been my protector. And Samuel comes and he puts up this Ebenezer. stone, a reminder to the people of what happened.

Remember the time the Philistines came amongst us and God freed us from the threat. But if you remember, probably don't remember, but if you go back to, I can't find it, at the beginning when they came to battle against the Philistines in chapter four, the people of us encamped at Ebenezer.

It says in chapter four, verse one, they encamped at Ebenezer when they went on their own strength. And then it says later on in the passage that the Philistines took the ark from Ebenezer.

I can't find the verse there. So this stone, not only a reminder of what God had done for them, it was a reminder of themselves and what they had done, the errors they had made.

A reminder that they were before God, a reminder that they had to acknowledge, it was a reminder that they were acknowledging this day, that they were putting all their gods behind them.

[ 22 : 31 ] And they were going to trust in this God, they had made their stakes, we have sinned before you, and we will be faithful today to you.

We will be faithful to you, our Lord and our God, you are one. This stone may be a reminder of when God departed from them, but they didn't leave them, gods that came back to them, God that was fighting for them even when he was in a land where they couldn't see it.

God was long-suffering with them, and he was faithful to them, and he came back as their salvation. And again, what we mentioned in prayer, we can have many stones of remembrance in our lives.

There are places that are good for us to come back to and remember what God has done. And the stone was set up for the people, as I reminded and witnessed before them, this is what God has done for you.

And they would come back there time and time and see, remember the time that we made all our mistakes, that God was faithful to us, and God delivered us from a time that we thought we were at loss, a time that we had been overcome, but he was faithful.

[ 24 : 06 ] And in a sense, Christ, our great intercessor, has set up a stone of remembrance for us in the Lord's Supper, that we come and confess ourselves and who we are.

We examine ourselves. We are thankful for all that he has done for us, and we praise him, that he is the one that has overcome death for us, and he has been our protector, and he is one that will go with us.

But notice also, before we finish, that there was peace in the land. When they came and devoted themselves, you know, they have been through all this fighting, with the ark coming back, and God showing them who he was, and then when they come and consecrate themselves, when they give the entirety of their being to God, he gives them peace.

It says in verse 13, that the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel.

There was peace between Israel and the Amorites.

I think I put that wrong. There was peace in the land. There was peace in the land. Desires of the people, when they went to fight to be set free from the Philistines in chapter four, when they went to fight, this is what they tried to do on their own strength, but they didn't gain it.

[ 25 : 41 ] They forgot about God, they didn't respect God, they didn't honour God the way they should have and they were defeated. But God is one that gave them what they desired when they came back to him.

Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart, Psalm 37. Peace is found with God. The believer will have peace when he gives everything that he has to God.

and we look back over our lives and we see, yes, we've done many things wrong, many sins in us and they continue with us and we want to put all these things away from us.

We don't want to have any idols, but they will come and we will give them a position that we shouldn't and we must come back and confess our failure, confess our sins, realizing the need of his son and the sacrifice that he paid for us, calling out to him that he would intercede for us, that he would remember us and not cease to pray for us.

We would call out to him because we are weak and we are desperately in need of strengthening to face the battle that we have against this world, death is an evil that will overcome me, but he is one that has delivered us from death.

[ 27 : 17 ] He is not one that will fail you. He is our great intercessor that stands there on our behalf before God and he does not dismiss our confession when we cry to him for our help and he is one that will set us free from our iniquities and it will be true that as we look back over our lives and even as we sit here tonight we can say till now the Lord has helped us and every day we can look back saying the Lord has helped us every step that we have taken.

He has been faithful to us. He has not dismissed my pleas and my cry for help. He has been my protector. He has been my deliverer and he is one that is worthy of trusting.

He is all powerful. He is all wise. He is all holy. He is all just. He is good and he is true and true to his people. There is none besides him.

He is one. And maybe when you go home you can read through Hannah's prayer and you can see when Samuel comes into his own here and delivers the people.

There are elements of Hannah's prayer that just fit in with this passage so well. Where he delivers him and there is a thundering of the Lord. Hannah's got that focus on who the Lord is.

[ 28 : 54 ] She knows who the Lord is. And God honoured his name through his people. God will vindicate his name through his people.

God will not leave you or forsake you. Amen. May we conclude in praise by singing in Psalm 143 of the Scottish Church.