

# Revivalism Versus Reformation

## 1Samuel 4:1-22

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 11-1-2009

### Introduction – What is revivalism?

#### 1. Def. revivalism – inward focused, pietistic, emotionalism

In my devotions this past Wednesday I was in Luke 9 where three of the disciples were with Jesus when he was transfigured on the mountaintop. And Peter wants to keep that moment forever by building three tabernacles so that Moses, Elijah, and Jesus can stay there. He is overwhelmed by the experience and wants his mountain top experience to last. But God rebukes Peter when he says, **“This is My beloved Son, Hear Him!”** God wanted the disciples to base their lives on Christ’s Words, not simply a mountain top experience. And years later Peter remembered that event in 2 Peter 1 and warned his readers that it is so easy to be diverted by what is good from something that is best. He said that he had incredible experiences too. **“And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.”** But he says, **“we have a more sure word of prophecy, which you do well to heed.”** He says that the Scriptures are infinitely more sure than that experience, and then goes on to speak of the sufficiency of Scripture. That in a nutshell is God’s call to not constantly be pursuing experiences but rather to be transformed by the renewing of our minds through the Scriptures. Revivalism is caught up in experience, whereas revival and reformation are always characterized by people going back to the Bible.

Today is Reformation Day, and every year I have wanted to preach on different aspects of this topic of Reformation because of the critical need for a new Reformation in our own day. And I don’t think that the greatest enemy to Reformation is the evil in the world out there. I don’t even think that the greatest enemy to Reformation is the evil within the church. Several of us Reformed people believe that the greatest enemy to Reformation is a counterfeit within the church that we have labeled Revivalism – not revival, but revivalism. People in the church call it revival, but Biblical revival brings individuals and churches back to God’s grace and back to God’s law. What goes for revival today actually inoculates Christians against the real

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thing. It makes them look to things like emotional highs, being slain in the Spirit, ecumenical unity, intense worship, and flamboyant preaching that gives you an adrenaline rush – they look to these kinds of things as evidences of God’s presence in our midst. The tough slogging of God’s soldiers through the muddy fields isn’t as glamorous – but it’s at the heart of what revival and reformation is all about. Revivalists want a constant high of celebration. But in my view there is nothing *to* celebrate if we aren’t living the truth of Scripture out by the power of the Holy Spirit. You see, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Amos all had people who experienced the kinds of things that you see in revivalism and God told them it wasn’t revival. In fact, God said that their intense worship that was fresh and enthusiastic was actually a stench in His nostrils.

In Isaiah 1 God described their fancy and enthusiastic worship services and said, **“My soul hates [them]... I am weary of bearing them.”** Why? Why would God not want such enthusiastic, quality, professional, praise? He said, **“I cannot endure iniquity... Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow.”** In other words, God rejected their revivalism and wanted Reformation.

In Ezekiel 33:30-33 the people love to come to worship, they love to hear the preaching of Ezekiel, they are intense in their emotional commitment to God, they are doing the equivalent of blogging and twittering each other and excitedly telling each other, **“Please come and hear what the word is that comes from the LORD”** (v. 30). What preacher wouldn’t be thrilled with that. Ezekiel was, at least for a while. Like modern sermon junkies, they were listening to the best of the best sermons on their Apple iPods. But you know what? God told Ezekiel not to get excited. He told Ezekiel that it wasn’t revival and that it certainly wasn’t reformation. God complains:

**Ezekiel 33:31 So they come to you as people do, they sit before you as My people, and they hear your words, but they do not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, *but* their hearts pursue their *own* gain.**

**Ezekiel 33:32 Indeed you *are* to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they do not do them.**

Sometime read through the prophets with an eye to the difference between Revivalism and Reformation and you will be amazed at how relevant these prophets are to what is happening in modern America.

In Amos God is not the least bit pleased with the revivalism happening there. The people are enthusiastic. The preachers are happy. Money is pouring in from the offerings of people who are satisfied with church. They are growing during tough times. But God says,

**Amos 5:21** “I hate, I despise your feast days,

And I do not savor your sacred assemblies.

**Amos 5:22** Though you offer Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings,  
I will not accept *them*,

Nor will I regard your fattened peace offerings.

**Amos 5:23** Take away from Me the noise of your songs,

For I will not hear the melody of your stringed instruments.

**Amos 5:24** But let justice run down like water,

And righteousness like a mighty stream.

In other words, God is saying that He is not the least bit interested in revivalism. He is interested in *genuine* revival, which transforms lives. But He is even more interested in Reformation. And with such strong statements against revivalism I think it is imperative that we not long for the wrong thing.

How many here have tasted Lucky Charms cereal? That’s the cereal that used to have the jingle, “Lucky Charms. They’re magically delicious.” How many here actually *like* Lucky Charms? It’s pretty sweet. It gives you a quick sugar high. Now at the risk of getting my neck rung by some of you sugar bomb junkies, I think it must take magic to make sugar coated Styrofoam taste good. It takes something beyond reality to make Lucky Charms a multimillion dollar best seller cereal. But it is sweet and it does have clever advertizing and packaging. The packaging is so good that when my kids were younger, they knew they loved certain cereals before they had even tasted them. There was something about the packaging in their presence that made it all seem so great. Context, packaging, expectations, and sugar highs can make a powerful impact in people’s lives.

And I think that it is packaging, context and proverbial sugar-highs that have made some people think they are experiencing God at one point and not experiencing God at another point. I will admit that there *is* a degree of subjectivity in experiencing God’s presence. But we live in a Christian culture that markets shallow sugarcoated Styrofoam so effectively through radio, CD’s, concerts, iTunes, and church that people feel like they are missing out if they have not had certain emotional rushes, or delightful rapture or a snap-crackle-pop in their devotions. *They* feel sub-Christian even though *God* may be pleased with their walk. God knows they are soldiers slogging through the mud and He is pleased with them even though

they are tired and worn out. And they are thinking, “I am so terrible because I don’t constantly have these feelings.” But God is pleased with them. And for the same reason, other Christians may feel like all is well with their soul because they have tasted the sweetness of an emotional high, but they aren’t paying attention to God’s admonition – “**This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!**” Exclamation mark. Listen to Him. But people who are flagrantly ignoring God’s Word feel quite fine because they are living from emotional high to emotional high. And I think this is a great passage for describing the vaccine of revivalism that makes people no longer sense the need for true reformation. It’s time that the church ditched its constant search for revivalism and began to seek *true* revival, and even beyond that – culture-changing reformation.

**2. Def. revival – backward focused, restoration of the heart and actions to what God had previously wrought; a passion for Jesus and His kingdom**

So just briefly, let me distinguish between true revival and reformation. Revival is a wonderful thing. I have prayed many times for revival in my own heart. Scripture speaks about God reviving the first love, the first works, and revival of various other aspects of our walk. It is really a restoration of the heart and actions to what God had previously wrought. So revival is looking back at the good old days. What many people are looking for in American social institutions is a revival of the former times. That would be good in its own right. It would be a whole lot better than what we have now. It would be wonderful if America had the passion for Jesus and His kingdom that it once had.

**3. Def. reformation – forward thinking with at least three elements: 1) everything in revival, 2) a theological paradigm shift that seeks to take every thought captive to Christ and His Word, 3) a reshaping of family, church, and society to actually live out the blueprints of God’s Word.**

But the New Covenant calls us to expect so much more than revival or looking back to the good old days. It calls us to have a forward thinking that enters into everything promised in prophecy. Now some of those prophecies seem almost impossible to expect. It takes faith to expect Reformation. Reformation includes everything good in revival, but it also asks for two more things. It asks for such a paradigm shift in our thinking that we will not be satisfied with anything less than every thought being taken captive to

Christ and His Word – and that happening in every *area* of thought. Secondly, Reformation thinking is not satisfied with the old institutions being repaired, however good they may have been. It doesn't want the old wineskins. It wants new wine skins. It wants to go beyond that into a reshaping of every institution in society to conform to God's Word. I think Andrew Sandlin describes this difference well when he says,

“Revival and reformation are not to be equated. Revival is a stirring of apathetic saints; reformation is an alteration of their very spiritual core. Revival ... is a sovereign, gratuitous outpouring of the Holy Spirit... reformation is a revision of the very heart of religion, a conscious effort to make a full-scale break with all that is unscriptural, and to reinstall Scripture as the final authority of belief and practice; the effects of revival are temporary; those of reformation span centuries. Revival makes better Christians; reformation makes a better Christianity. Revival makes Christians more zealous; reformation makes them more knowledgeable. Revivals occur spasmodically; the work of reformation is never completed.”

I believe that Revelation 14:4 gives one of the best definitions of reformation. It says, “**these are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes.**” Reformation is constantly following Jesus into the upward call of God's Word. It knows nothing of impossibilities. Reformation thinking refuses to say, “Christian politics is impossible, so I will compromise,” or “A consistent denomination is impossible, so we will compromise,” or “Our children standing on our shoulders and going beyond us is impossible, so we will let our children aim for less.” Reformation thinking is not satisfied with restoring the past. It's pushing into God's promises for the future. Reformation is a passion to see Jesus lifted up in every area of life. It is a passion to see the blueprints of His Word lived out in every area of life. It is a passion to see every sphere of life subdued under Christ's feet. So we say “No,” to revivalism. We say, “Yes” to revival. But we are passionate about “Reformation.”

So you've gotten your topical sermon this morning. I want to now look at 1Samuel 1-7 and show how Israel went from revivalism, to revival, and then in chapter 7 to the greatest Reformation in Israel for the next 370 years. I think it will give us encouragement to expect great things from God.

## I. Bad Times (1Samuel 1-6) - the prelude to Reformation

### A. *How bad was it?*

Flip back to chapter 2. We are going to be looking at how bad things were. 1Sa 2.12 says, “**Now the sons of Eli were corrupt; they did not know the LORD.**” They professed to know Him. After all, they were pastors.

But they were liberal. They really did not know the Lord. These were bad times such as we live in. There was a desperate need for Reformation, but Reformation seemed impossible. How many years had the church been corrupt? How many years could it be said that they really did not know the Lord? They were pursuing after other things. And in the case of these pastors, they definitely were not listening to God's beloved Son in the Old Testament Scriptures.

Look at the abuse of their office. We'll start reading in verse 13:

**1Samuel 2:13 And the priests' custom with the people *was that* when any man offered a sacrifice, the priest's servant would come with a three-pronged fleshhook in his hand while the meat was boiling.**

**1Samuel 2:14 Then he would thrust *it* into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; and the priest would take for himself all that the fleshhook brought up. So they did in Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there.**

This was robbing from the people what was rightfully theirs. The priests were only supposed to get the breast and right thigh. The rest was offered to the Lord and eaten by the worshipper. But they were taking more than their fair share.

I see ministers today who preach revival all the time, but they despise God's law of the tithe, saying that tithing is unbiblical. What do they do instead? They make people guilty for not giving *much* more, or for not taking loans on their house to finance a church building. They want people to plant a seed of \$1000 into the pastor's life with the promise that God will give them back much more. I never see these pastors planting \$1000 into their member's laps. If this were such a good principle you would think *they* would do it. But they buy their \$6000 suits by taking financial advantage of people. Verse 15:

**1Samuel 2:15 Also, before they burned the fat, the priest's servant would come and say to the man who sacrificed, "Give meat for roasting to the priest, for he will not take boiled meat from you, but raw."**

This was wrong on three counts: First, they weren't supposed to eat the fat at all. 100% of it was to go to the Lord. Second, they weren't supposed to take what was being sacrificed. Third, they weren't supposed to take anything for themselves until after an offering had been made, and it could only be the parts specified by the Lord. Their ecclesiology was messed up. They weren't looking to the Word of God for how they ruled their church. Verse 16:

**1Samuel 2:16 ¶ And *if* the man said to him, "They should really burn the fat first; *then* you may take *as much* as your heart desires," he would then answer him, "No, but you must give *it* now; and if not, I will take *it* by force."**

There was no accountability of these people financially or socially. They did their own thing. And if you didn't like it, they told you to lump it. Verse 17:

**1Samuel 2:17 ¶ Therefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD, for men abhorred the offering of the LORD.**

Things were bad in the church. Look down at verse 22.

**1Samuel 2:22 ¶ Now Eli was very old; and he heard everything his sons did to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.**

Do we have sexual immorality among the clergy today? Yes we do. Do we have people despising God's law? Yes we do. There is so much hypocrisy that people have come to abhor the church itself. But there was no discipline of these men as can be seen by the subsequent verses. So things were extremely bad. You might say that it was as unlikely for Reformation to happen back then as it is today.

*B. God was preparing the way for Reformation by raising people in strategic places.*

But a second thing that we see in these verses is that God was preparing the way for Reformation by raising up godly leaders. Chapter 1 describes one family, representative of the godly remnant. Verse 19 talks about the conception of Samuel, and then goes on to show how God protected Samuel in a perverse age. Chapter 2 goes on to speak of how God strategically placed Samuel in a position where he could make a difference. Chapter 3 shows the foundation of God's Word beginning to be restored to its rightful place in the church. All the way through these difficult times God was already making the preparations for a mighty Reformation. But neither revival nor Reformation had started yet.

And I see God doing the same thing in our own day. He has not left the church without a witness. There are more leaders speaking a Reformation message today than there were thirty years ago. There are more culture changing books being printed today than ever before. God is strategically placing key men in key leadership positions, and he is raising up a remnant of men and women whose heart's cry is for Reformation. They are willing to come down from mountain top experiences and get involved in the tough slogging of soldiers through the mud fields. They are not looking for comfort or pats on the back. To me that indicates that God is about to do something, and I am encouraged. You see these patterns in history.

***C. God prepared His people for Reformation through discipline and pain (3:19)***

But almost always, God has to severely discipline the church before it will repent and be open to the kind of Reformation that happened in chapter 7. And I see this beginning to happen as well. The tough times that are coming are signs of God's loving hand of discipline.

And chapter 4 speaks of this severe discipline. God not only killed the liberal pastors, but he killed over 30,000 men in that war. He would no longer tolerate a church that was a poor testimony to the world and it was better in His eyes that 30,000 men die than that the church remain in its sinful state. Why? Because He was more interested in Reformation than in Revivalism.

And by the way, why would the Israelites be judged when the priests were the ones sinning? God implies that the leaders are simply a reflection of the people. In fact, their faulty view of grace and freedom to sin led others to sin. In verse 24 their father complained, **“No, my sons! For it is not a good report that I hear. You make the LORD's people transgress.”** And that is exactly what has happened in Revivalistic America. The loose views of grace and law in the church almost guarantee that members will transgress. It was almost axiomatic in the late 1800's and early 1900's that there would be a rash of illegitimate babies exactly nine months after the emotional revivalism of a camp revival meeting. Just that issue by itself shows how far removed revivalism from true reformation. But I am especially conscious of verse 25 where, after Eli rebukes his sons for their sins, it says, **“Nevertheless they did not heed the voice of their father, because the LORD desired to kill them.”** Try to reconcile that with the modern view of grace that is being promoted today! He *desired* to kill them. God was present in the battle that we read about in chapter 4. It was a presence of discipline and covenantal cursing. That is so different from the pitiful conception of God in much modern Christianity. But I don't lose hope. The God who could bring Reformation then, is a God who can do so today.

## **II. God's Word & Power Is Essential (1Sa 4.1-2) – the foundations for the Reformation under Samuel**

***A. Word must never be separated from the power of God's presence (3:19)***

The first thing God does is to restore a bold preaching of the whole counsel of God, and an application of that Word to all of life. Let's start with chapter 3:19: **So Samuel grew, and the LORD was *with* him and let none**



**of his words fall to the ground.** It was God’s Word with the power of God’s presence. Both were essential. None of his prophetic words fell to the ground. In other words, they were infallible and inerrant and fully to be trusted. But in addition to having the Bible (and he wrote Ruth, Judges and 1Samuel), it says that the Lord was *with* Him. Both God’s Word and Power are essential. I’m not one of those naysayers who believe doctrine without experience is acceptable. It is not. With Moses I pray to God, “**If Your Presence does not go *with us*, do not bring us up from here.**” I know too well that without Christ I can do nothing. So it’s a false dilemma to say that it is either revivalism or dry theology. Paul said that it was both Word and power. James speaks of word and deed. John 7:17 speaks of doctrine and doing God’s will. Both must be held together for Reformation to ever happen. And they were held together in Samuel and in a faithful remnant.

***B. God gave them oatmeal – they wanted Lucky Charms (3:19-4:1a)***

Chapter 3:20-21: **And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel had been established as a prophet of the LORD. Then the LORD appeared again in Shiloh. For the LORD revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD.** Chapter 4 begins, “**And the word of Samuel came to all Israel.**” Samuel not only gave oral revelation from God, but he also wrote the books of Judges, Ruth, and 1Samuel. Reformation preaching was happening everywhere. But as we move through this chapter we discover that this preaching was not yet appreciated and did not yet produce Reformation. And this is the way it always is. God wants to make it clear that revival and Reformation cannot be produced by man, no matter how eloquent his preaching. Man can produce revivalism, but Revival and Reformation are sovereign works of God’s Spirit. I don’t think the church is ordinarily open to Reformation preaching when they have been used to chocolate covered sugar bombs, or Lucky Charms. People in Samuel’s early years wanted a God who would do what they wanted, not a Christianity that would do what God wanted.

So why did they have such confidence in God when they went into battle? I think it was in part because Samuel was clearly a man of God. There is a sense in which they felt OK because of Samuel’s presence. The miracles that were happening were proof positive that God was on their side. So they went to battle with tremendous confidence. But it was a confidence in *Samuel* (a man), not a linking of Word and power in their *own* lives.

We need to be careful that our confidence in God is not second hand. There are people who go through a lifetime being awed by the experiences

that others have of God's presence without ever experiencing it themselves. They get choked up over the wonderful stories that they hear on Dobson, or in Missionary Biographies or from sermons and that second hand experience makes them feel that God is real. And that's not all bad. But because they live in an atmosphere that obviously has God's presence they feel that all is well with their soul even though they are walking in rebellion against Him. If you are walking in rebellion to God, no matter how trivial, you have not yet experienced God's work of revival, let alone Reformation.

***C. They lacked strength because of their disobedience to God (vv. 1-2)***

Look at chapter 4, verses 1-2: **And the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out to battle against the Philistines, and encamped beside Ebenezer; and the Philistines encamped in Aphek. Then the Philistines put themselves in battle array against Israel. And when they joined battle, Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who killed about four thousand men of the army in the field.** This defeat was a direct result of their disobedience to God. But they don't get it. And they are so disappointed. They had faith in the reality of God, and then got crushed. It is easy when that happens to become disillusioned with God. A counterfeit sense of God's presence has let many, many people down in evangelical churches.

***D. God's presence never left them – He was there to defeat them (v. 3a)***

In verse 3 they ask the right question. They ask, "**Why has the LORD defeated us today before the Philistines?**" There is much that is right about that question. They did not abandon their covenant theology completely. They didn't do like so many Christians today and blame it all on the devil. They knew that they were in covenant with God for either blessing or cursing. This was something that God had done. "**Why has the LORD defeated us today before the Philistines?**" It's a good question, and we need to ask that when we see the church having lost battle after battle in the last one hundred years. Why has the Lord defeated us in America? It's not because of a lack of children's ministries, women's ministries, youth ministries, men's ministries, evangelistic outreaches, small groups, discipleship programs, and untold other programs. Many authors have pointed out that the church spends more money than ever, has larger budgets than ever, more training than ever, yet less impact than ever on the world. It's not because the church is lacking effort that the Lord is fighting against us.

So they ask the right question: Why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines?

*E. They asked the right question, but didn't give the right answer (v. 3)*

But their answer was wrong. Instead of looking to the Bible for what was wrong about their relationship with God, they found it easier to take the Lucky Charm way. They were orthodox in theology and yet still sought to manipulate God the pagan way.

### **III. God's Presence Cannot Be Manipulated (1Sa 4.3-4) – the Sovereignty of God's Reformation**

Let's pick up part way through verse 3: **“Let us bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD from Shiloh to us, that when it comes among us it may save us from the hand of the enemies. So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from there the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, who dwells between the cherubim. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.**

They were scheduling God's presence in this battlefield much as modern revivalists schedule a revival. You can schedule an *emotional* happening, but you cannot schedule true revival. You can *petition* God to revive His church, but you can't say, “We are going to have a revival meeting at 7 o'clock on Wednesday.” God is sovereign, and He can't be manipulated like that or carried around on our shoulders and plans like a Lucky Charm. Too many people treat Christianity like Alladin's lamp and expect God to appear like a Genie any time He is needed. But we need to realize that all is of grace including His presence. If you have found yourself manipulating God in various ways, you need a good dose of His sovereignty. God gave them that dose of reality in this battle.

### **IV. God's Presence Is Not Primarily Experienced In Emotions (1Sa 4.5-8) – the fleshly substitute for Reformation**

But there is another thing in this passage that we need to notice. God's presence is not experienced only or primarily in emotions. This is a huge mistake that evangelicals make all the time. They think that if they are not having a mountain top experience at all times that God is not present in their lives and they feel depressed and discouraged. And it is the mountain top syndrome that is played up so much in worship service philosophies, and

in seminars and in conferences that people go to. They not only set people up for disappointment, but they make people despise the *ordinary* in God's church, the *ordinary* in God's plans, and the *ordinary* in His presence. It's not God's will that we always have these mountain top experiences. Some of the most powerful leaders down through time have been very stable with neither emotional highs nor emotional lows. I'm not saying that it's bad to have those highs or lows. Some of that is personality. I am just saying, "Don't confuse it with God's presence."

Notice the emotional high that accompanies this new program for advancing God's Kingdom in verse 5: "**And when the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel shouted so loudly that the earth shook.**" What an emotionally charged place that must have been! I've been to rock concerts where my innards shook, but the very ground was shaking here. This was amazing. Verses 6-7 say that even the Philistines were incredibly affected by the shout. They interpreted this emotionalism to mean that God was present. That's the pagan way. That's the Lucky Charm way. The text says, "**Now when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, 'What does the sound of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews mean?'**" Then they understood that the ark of the LORD had come into the camp. Being Lucky Charm people, verse 7 makes sense: **So the Philistines were afraid, for they said, 'God has come into the camp!' And they said, 'Woe to us! For such a thing has never happened before.'** Wouldn't it be neat if the worship at Dominion Covenant Church were so emotionally laden that unbelievers who came in were overcome and admitted there was something going on? Don't be so sure. We don't want their view of Christianity to be based on emotions, which can pass. We want an authentic *experience* of God's presence and grace, not a Lucky Charms one. Sure we want to sanctify our emotions to the Lord, but we don't want to ground anything on our emotions. But the point I want to highlight is even the heathen were affected by this awesome display which makes stadium-emotion pale by comparison. "Surely," we would say, "God must be fighting for Israel." God's people are shaking the planet, they are so on fire for the Lord. Even the Devil Himself is quaking in his boots. The church is taking the name of the Lord on their lips and they are setting up the standard for the battle.

**V. God's Presence Is Experienced In Accordance With His Word In Both Blessing and Cursing (1Sa 4.9-22) – Reformation is not content with superficial allegiance.**

But God reminds these people that His presence is experienced in accordance with His Word in *both blessing and cursing*.

In verse 9 the Philistines respond by saying, “**Be strong and conduct yourselves like men, you Philistines, that you do not become servants of the Hebrews, as they have been to you. Conduct yourselves like men, and fight!**” Though they were afraid, God ensured that they would resist because Israel needed to be taught a lesson.

Truth was too important for God to ignore this counterfeit vaccine. And in the ensuing battle, 30,000 soldiers would die. The pastor’s sons are killed. The chief priest dies. And worst of all, the Ark of the Covenant was captured by the pagans. No wonder Phinehas’ wife, as she dies, names her child, “**Ichabod**,” meaning, “**The glory has departed.**”

Most of us would probably agree and might say, God was not present. The glory had departed. But you know what? We would be mistaken. God was powerfully present to discipline His people. He had promised, “**I will never leave you nor forsake you.**” And He hadn’t left them. He was actively disciplining them. It was precisely because of His presence that all of these soldiers had died. When we speak of God’s presence we usually mean His presence in blessing. But it is important to remember that God is always present with His people in either blessing or cursing. When you partake of the Lord’s Table, God’s presence guarantees that there will be one of two outcomes – blessing or cursing. It always happens. Some of you get progressively more cursed, and some of you get progressively more blessed.

One commentator, Dale Davis, said,

“One must be careful not to miss the way God is working here. It is so easy to be wrapped up in the bloodiness of Israel’s defeat, in the tragedy of the ark’s capture, in the blot on Yahweh’s reputation, that one becomes blind to the fact that in the middle of all this Yahweh is clearly but quietly fulfilling a word he had spoken. Indeed, though in fulfilling this word he acts in judgment he nevertheless acts in grace, for in his judgment he is removing false shepherds who caused his people to go astray.”

In other words it was God’s faithfulness and love being manifested through discipline. And so this passage is just one of many that shows that God is not satisfied with American style revival. When God moves powerfully in revival, it is to convict with sin, to discipline His people, and to destroy the idols of chapter 5. I love the way God made the idol Dagon fall on its face before the ark of the covenant and for its head and hands to get broken off. God is in the idol destroying business. And Israel’s defeat in this battle was designed to humble the pride of man and lift up His own glory in chapter 6.

It was to make the word of God foundational to all thinking and practice, and to establish leaders like Samuel who would move the people to be transformed through the Scriptures as you see in chapter 7.

## VI. Reformation finally came in 1 Samuel 7

### *A. Thorough going repentance 7:2*

Here are hints of the Reformation in chapter 7. Verse 2 says, “**All the house of Israel lamented after the LORD.**” This speaks of thoroughgoing repentance. It was no longer just a remnant that was repenting of their sins. Every person in Israel was so convicted by the Spirit that they all repented of their sins. They all hungered and thirsted after righteousness. I pray every day that God would bring the whole church to genuine repentance. If He could do it in 1 Samuel before the cross and Pentecost, He can certainly do it today.

### *B. Following God with all their heart (7:3)*

The second indicator of Reformation is in chapter 7, verse 3. “**Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, ‘If you return to the LORD with all your heart, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths from among you, and prepare your hearts for the LORD...’**” This is a thoroughgoing pursuit of the Lord, with any encumbrances and any compromises being cast away. I pray daily that God would give the church of Jesus Christ a heart that (as Revelation 14 words it) follows the Lamb wherever He goes, and that casts away any and all compromises – compromises from science, from psychology, from sociology, from civics, family, courtship, health, finances, eating, studies, or anything else. This is why 2 Chronicles tells us that it wasn’t until Josiah some 370 years later that Israel had such a thorough going Reformation as they had here.

### *C. Serving God alone in all they did (7:3)*

The third thing we see in verse 3 is the phrase, “**and serve Him only.**” It takes a move of God’s Spirit to keep us from serving ourselves, or to keep us from being men-pleasers in our service. It takes a move of God to keep politicians from serving their constituents rather than doing as Romans 13 says they should – serving God; being ministers of God. When you see our families, churches, and culture serving God only, you will know that a massive Reformation has happened. Did they do that? Yes. Verse 4 says they did: “**So the children of Israel put away the Baals and the**

**Ashtoreths, and served the LORD only.”** This is my heart’s desire – that we would serve the Lord only.

***D. Tearing down competing systems of thought (7:4)***

And of course that reference to putting away the Baals and Ashtoreths means that they tore down all competing systems of thought. Until Christians learn to educate from a Biblical perspective alone, they are automatically allowing Baals and Ashtoreths into their homes. Every Reformation in history had Christian education. Reformation is characterized by the slogans Sola Scriptura, Sola Gratia, Solo Christo, Sola Fide, and Sole Deo Gloria. Those solas show that no competition with God is allowed in a true Reformation.

***E. All governments (self, family, church, and civil) under God’s law (7:5-17)***

I won’t take the time to show this, but in the next few verses of this chapter we see that all governments were under God’s law. Self-government is not a humanistic “pull yourself up by your bootstraps” self-discipline, but it is a discipline of every aspect of our lives by God’s Word and by His power.

Family government is not independence, but a relating of the family to every other government as God’s Word instructs. Too many homeschooling families are self-absorbed and self-centered. And true Reformation will cause us to be passionate to serve and transform culture. And we need to be training our children to serve in ways that don’t benefit our families.

Church government is not building a pastor’s ego or empire, but is regulating the shepherding of families and individuals according to the pattern of limited government that the Scripture gives.

And the limited civil government that this chapter speaks of could only be possible as the other governments were reformed to God’s Word. Samuel did not set up a centralized government. It was so decentralized that in many ways it looked like libertarianism. But it wasn’t libertarianism. It was limited government under God’s law, and it only worked because the other governments were also holy.

**Conclusion**

And my charge to you on this Reformation weekend is to believe God for a greater Reformation than has ever happened to this date. Isaiah 52:8 doesn’t simply promise a time when Christians will believe the

fundamentals. It says, **“For they shall see eye to eye when the LORD brings back Zion.”** It is not unbiblical to pray for a total unity of truth and to strive for a total unity of truth. After all, Ephesians 4:12-16 says that we will eventually **“all come to the unity of faith... to a mature man... that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine...”** What Paul is saying is that the doctrinal division that we are experiencing today will eventually pass away in history.

If Samuel could believe God for true Reformation, we have a greater reason for doing so. It is not unbiblical to pray that God would convert every magistrate in our nation. Psalm 72 and Isaiah 62 both promise that all magistrates will bow before king Jesus and serve Him faithfully. We are praying according to His will when we pray such things. Don't just pray for revival. That is only asking God to take us back to some good period of the past. Pray for future reformation such as this world has never seen. Our God is a big God, and we glorify Him when we ask for impossibilities worthy of His greatness. Saturday morning I was struck by one of the titles for God in my Greek devotional Bible (μεγαλειότης), which means “Greatness” or “Majesty.” Verse 10 says that God thundered with a loud thunder upon the Philistines and overcame them. May He thunder once again against His enemies today! Amen.



# Revivalism Versus Reformation

## 1Samuel 4:1-22

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 11-1-2009

Introduction – What is revivalism?

1. Def. revivalism – inward focused, pietistic, emotionalism
2. Def. revival – backward focused, restoration of the heart and actions to what God had previously wrought; a passion for Jesus and His kingdom
3. Def. reformation – forward thinking with at least three elements: 1) everything in revival, 2) a theological paradigm shift that seeks to take every thought captive to Christ and His Word, 3) a reshaping of family, church, and society to actually live out the blueprints of God's Word.

### I. Bad Times (1Samuel 1-6) - the prelude to Reformation

- A. How bad was it?
- B. God was preparing the way for Reformation by raising people in strategic places.
- C. God prepared His people for Reformation through discipline and pain (3:19)

### II. God's Word & Power Is Essential (1Sa 4.1-2) – the foundations for the Reformation under Samuel

- A. Word must never be separated from the power of God's presence (3:19)
- B. God gave them oatmeal – they wanted Lucky Charms (3:19-4:1a)
- C. They lacked strength because of their disobedience to God (vv. 1-2)
- D. God's presence never left them – He was there to defeat them (v. 3a)
- E. They asked the right question, but didn't give the right answer (v. 3)

### III. God's Presence Cannot Be Manipulated (1Sa 4.3-4)

### III. Sovereignty of God's Reformation

### IV. God's Presence Is Not Primarily Experienced In Emotions (1Sa 4.5-8) – the fleshly substitute for Reformation

### V. God's Presence Is Experienced In Accordance With His Word In Both Blessing and Cursing (1Sa 4.9-22) – Reformation is not content with superficial allegiance.

### VI. Reformation finally came in 1Samuel 7

- A. Thorough-going repentance 7:2
- B. Following God with all their heart (7:3)
- C. Serving God alone in all they did (7:3)
- D. Tearing down competing systems of thought (7:4)
- E. All governments (self, family, church, and civil) under God's law (7:5-17)

Conclusion