**Faithful Regardless -** a study of 1st Samuel

***“Spiritual Appropriation”***

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In chapter 4 – we saw the prophesy of doom upon Eli, his household and all of Israel come to pass.

* 34,000 Israelites were killed in battle
* Hophni and Phinehas were killed as well
* Eli fell over and broke his neck and was killed.
* His pregnant daughter-in-law died during childbirth announcing the name of his grandson as *Ichabod* (“inglorious” or “there is no glory”).
* Worst of all, The Ark of the Covenant had been captured by the Philistines!

In this chapter we will look at what happened to the Philistines when they stole the ark of the Covenant and brought it into their camp.

There is a modern term that describes this type of thing;

SPIRITUAL APPROPRIATION – “adopting and profiting from spiritual practices that are not your own.”

It can also be referred to as *“religious or cultural appropriation”* – stealing customs, symbols and rituals from one community and using it inappropriately for another.

Many times people are accused of this falsely, especially these days, but we will see in the Bible some examples of REAL “Spiritual Appropriation”, dealing inappropriately with the *true* spirit of God and the destruction that comes from it.

We will see how this took place with the ark of the covenant and also look at similar examples in the New Testament and how it also occurs today.

***1st Samuel 5:1-12***

**5**After the Philistines had captured the ark of God, they took it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. **2**Then they carried the ark into Dagon’s temple and set it beside Dagon. **3**When the people of Ashdod rose early the next day, there was Dagon, fallen on his face on the ground before the ark of the Lord! They took Dagon and put him back in his place.

 **4**But the following morning when they rose, there was Dagon, fallen on his face on the ground before the ark of the Lord! His head and hands had been broken off and were lying on the threshold; only his body remained. **5**That is why to this day neither the priests of Dagon nor any others who enter Dagon’s temple at Ashdod step on the threshold.

**6**The Lord’s hand was heavy on the people of Ashdod and its vicinity; he brought devastation on them and afflicted them with tumors. **7**When the people of Ashdod saw what was happening, they said, “The ark of the god of Israel must not stay here with us, because his hand is heavy on us and on Dagon our god.” **8**So they called together all the rulers of the Philistines and asked them, “What shall we do with the ark of the god of Israel?”

They answered, “Have the ark of the god of Israel moved to Gath.” So, they moved the ark of the God of Israel.

**9**But after they had moved it, the Lord’s hand was against that city, throwing it into a great panic. He afflicted the people of the city, both young and old, with an outbreak of tumors. **10**So they sent the ark of God to Ekron.

As the ark of God was entering Ekron, the people of Ekron cried out, “They have brought the ark of the god of Israel around to us to kill us and our people.” **11**So they called together all the rulers of the Philistines and said, “Send the ark of the god of Israel away; let it go back to its own place, or it will kill us and our people.” For death had filled the city with panic; God’s hand was very heavy on it. **12**Those who did not die were afflicted with tumors, and the outcry of the city went up to heaven.

* The Philistines captured the ark, and took it from the land of the Israelites to their own cities Ashdod (Israel’s largest port city, located between Tel Aviv and The Gaza Strip), then to Gath (Goliath’s hometown), then to Ekron (closer to where they stole it from).
* When they first got it, they placed it next to their own god “Dagon”. Dagon was probably a large statue with arms and hands extended. The ark was a God-covered chest with statues of cherubim on the lid.
* The Philistines put the ark next to Dagon, either as a symbol of victory OR to double the power that their own god was believed to have offered them.

v.3-4 **3**When the people of Ashdod rose early the next day, there was Dagon, fallen on his face on the ground before the ark of the Lord! They took Dagon and put him back in his place.

 **4**But the following morning when they rose, there was Dagon, fallen on his face on the ground before the ark of the Lord! His head and hands had been broken off and were lying on the threshold; only his body remained.

*The first night the Da-gone statue fell right on its face, so they put it back up.*

*They second night it fell on its Dag-gone face again and it’s Da-gone hands, and Da-gone head fell off.* ***: )***

Immediately the people were struck with tumors and panic filled each city.

v. 11-12 “death had filled the city with panic; God’s hand was very heavy on it. **12**Those who did not die were afflicted with tumors”

They tried to take what was a holy object of God’s glory and appropriate it to their pagan religion in hopes of harnessing its power.

Instead, the hand of God was heavy upon them, and His spirit moved against them.

The Philistines learned the hard way, that you cannot capture, steal, or manipulate God’s power.

* God is not a force that serves whoever appropriates Him.
* He is not a “genie in a bottle” who is obligated to serve whoever possesses the bottle.
* He is the sovereign Lord, King of all creation and ruler of the Universe.

We serve **Him.**

Our job is to be obedient to him, or humbly ask forgiveness of Him when we are not.

God is not obligated to serve us, *even if we invoke His word or His name for our personal gain.*

When Paul first got to Ephesus, he planted a church and began to teach about Jesus.

He also did many miracles, healing people and casting out demons.

There were some guys called “The Sceva Brothers” (sons of a chief priest) who tried to do the same thing. They actually appropriated the name of Jesus to do so. In. other words they were using the name of Jesus (just like the Philistines used the ark), even though they did not know or believe in Jesus, it did not go well…

**Acts 19:11-16**

**11**God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, **12**so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them.

**13**Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, “In the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out.” **14**Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this.

**15**One day the evil spirit answered them, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?” **16**Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding. : }

In the name of Jesus – means under His authority and according to His will.

NOT just invoking His name for *your own purposes*.

That is actually what it means to “*take the Lord’s name in vain.”*

Politicians who use Bible verses in their speeches yet have no intention of honoring God in their lives or their policies.

High-Profile Ministries who use words like; “Faith, “the Word of God” and even the name of “Jesus” primarily to make millions of dollars for themselves. (only God knows their heart)

Activists and social justice warriors who take parts out of the Bible that promote their cause yet have no intention of applying the whole counsel of God or submitting their lives to Him.

What about us? do we ever take the Lord’s name in vain (3rd commandment)?

Do we ever use the word Jesus or the name Christian to make ourselves look good? (vanity)

Do we ever take verses and quotes out of the Bible to try to fit into our agenda instead of submitting to His?

**James 4:3:3,7-8,13-15 “**When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

**7**Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. **8**Come near to God and he will come near to you.

**13**Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.” **14**Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. **15**Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.”

Our prayer ALWAYS must be, to ask God for HIS will to be done, not our will.

**Matt 6:9-10** “Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be YOUR name.
**10**YOUR kingdom come. YOUR will be done…”

***NOT “****Our Father in heaven, ALLOW us to use YOUR name for OUR will to be done”*

When we try to *“appropriate”* God’s name for our will and purposes, it is not only *“inappropriate”,* as we’ve seen in scripture, very dangerous and consequential.

This is how we ask and pray “In His Name”

Not for our purposes but His, not our will but His, not for our glory, but HIS.

***[Friend Lee Iacocca story ]***

What did Jesus mean when he said;?

**John 14:14**You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it. (John 14:14)

*Doesn’t that mean that we can just make a wish list, pray it as a prayer, ask it in the name of J-e-s-u-s, and then he’s obligated to fulfill our wishes?*

Not, necessarily!

*Asking “In His Name”*

Means; In HIS will, under His authority, in-line with His purposes.

HIS kingdom come, HIS will be done, NOT your own.

John 14:14 is part of a section of scripture where Jesus qualifies that statement with specific criteria;

* That we believe,
* That we love Him,
* That we keep His commands,
* That we understand that doing things “in His name” is through the power of the *Holy Spirit,*
* Most importantly, that when ask “In His Name”, that we understand what it is to be “In Him, just as he is in us”.

**John 14:12-20** **“**Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. **13**And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ***14****You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.****15***“If you love me, keep my commands.

**16**And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— **17**the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. **18**I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. **19**Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. **20**On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. **21**Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.”

Unlike the Philistines who captured the ark of the covenant, or the sons of sceva in Ephesus,

We have the Holy Spirit within us, and we operate not in our own authority, but in Jesus’ name.

* We have salvation in Jesus’ name
* We have victory in Jesus’ name
* We have power in Jesus’ name
* When we live under the authority of Jesus’ name.

Closing Challenge:

Do “everything” in Jesus’ name.

***Col 3:17*17 “**And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”