

# THE ANTIDOTE

*1 Samuel 4:18-22*

## **A Word About Change**

It is a scientifically proven fact that change is one of humanity's greatest fears. We resist it with every fiber of our being. We love stability! We love when things remain as they are! Yet the inevitable aspect of life is that it always changes. Change can occur suddenly or gradually. Sometimes it's positive, sometimes negative. Sometimes we have no control over it, other times we're in complete command. But whether it happens over time or in an instant, CHANGE HAPPENS!

We must understand that change differs from transition. Change just happens, but transitions are made! Transition is the psychological process through which people come to terms with new situations. During transition, chaos can reign. People experience a mix of emotions: fear, confusion, uncertainty, stress, indecision, discouragement, skepticism, cynicism, creativity, and finally acceptance.

Metaphorically, transition is like that moment between letting go of one trapeze and grasping the next one you hope is swinging your way! It's the time we allow ourselves to get our bearings, make sense of our situation, and make the best decisions possible in the face of evolving challenges.

Transitions aren't negative—they're positive! They're God-ordained. You see, it's impossible to move from where you are to where you're going without making a transition.

A transition isn't change for change's sake; it's a passage from one state to another. It represents forward movement. When we as Christians encounter transition, when things become shaky and unfamiliar, we should realize that God is leading us somewhere. He is repositioning us. THERE ARE THINGS YOU CANNOT ACCESS WHERE YOU ARE! God wants to strategically position you to access things unavailable in your current location.

Jesus never had to keep up with the disciples; they had to keep up with Him. Jesus was always moving. The disciples had to transition from where they were to where He was, or risk being left behind. Similarly, if we want to remain in His presence, we must move from where we are to where He is. It does us no good to stay here if Jesus has moved there! Church... let's get to where He is this morning!

## **A Nation in Transition**

History shows us critical, transitional moments in the lives of nations and people. Our opening text witnesses one such critical transitional moment in Israel's life.

Two extremes were converging. One order was ending as another began. The era of the Judges was concluding, and the prophetic age was dawning. These two extremes merged in one man: Samuel. He was the last Judge and the first prophet.

Israel's spiritual leader at this time was Eli. He was a paragon of virtue—a good man, a godly man, a spiritual man. However, he had one glaring flaw: he failed to take a definitive stand against the widespread corruption that had invaded the priesthood. Perhaps this was because his two sons led the corruption!

The Bible tells us in 1 Samuel 2:12 that "The sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord" (KJV). Hophni and Phinehas, Eli's two sons, should have been the nation's spiritual leaders. Instead, scripture describes them as sons of Belial. The word "Belial" means "lewd, worthless, and lacking spiritual understanding." Those meant to inherit the nation's leadership lacked the one essential quality a spiritual leader MUST possess—the maturity to truly identify and understand spiritual matters.

Combined, you have a leader unable to discipline his children or speak up for what's right, and two more leaders who are lewd, worthless, and spiritually immature. The result? Absolute chaos.

### **A Personal Relationship?**

When a nation or group follows a leader who doesn't know God, devastation inevitably follows. Eli's sons had a rich spiritual heritage. They came from a prestigious family with connections to Aaron and the tribe of Levi. They possessed everything you'd expect from godly leaders—except a relationship with the One who mattered most! They lacked a relationship with God!

The story of Hophni and Phinehas reveals a staggering truth: it's possible to be a spiritual leader without having a relationship with God.

- Imagine a preacher trying to preach about a God they don't know
- How can a Bible teacher teach about a God they don't know?
- How can a choir sing about a God with whom they have no relationship?

Some believe that family heritage automatically grants favor with God. Let me clarify this reasoning. Knowing God has nothing to do with your parentage or your family's importance to the church. It doesn't matter if your siblings paid for the baptismal font! None of that matters.

You must develop your own relationship with God. It's personal! God has no grandchildren—only children! People cannot assume kingdom work based on pedigree or popularity. The requirement is knowing the Lord!

You may possess talent and ability, but kingdom work requires anointing. AND THE ANOINTING IS AVAILABLE ONLY THROUGH PROXIMITY. Let me explain.

The word "anoint" primarily used in the Old Testament Septuagint and Greek New Testament comes from the Greek word "chrio." This word originally meant the smearing or rubbing of oil or perfume upon a person. When I hear "anoint," I think not only of the oil but of the anointer's hands!

Oil was precious in biblical times; therefore, rather than tipping the bottle to pour, the anointer would first pour oil into their hands before applying it to the other person. Thus, I consider anointing a "hands-on" situation. Anointing required close proximity to the anointer!

To receive God's anointing, proximity is essential. You must enter His presence. There's no alternative! The anointing cannot be purchased, replicated, or gained through education. The current tragedy in our colleges and seminaries is that we produce men who know God's word—but that alone won't transform the world.

The question isn't whether they know God's Word. The question is: DO THEY KNOW THE GOD OF THE WORD?

Giving someone a preaching license based solely on academic ability is like giving a blind person a driving license. If they don't know God, why enter this calling? The crucial question remains... DO YOU KNOW THE LORD?

### **An Unholy Priesthood**

Those who know the Lord desire to obey His commandments, but those who don't know Him try to bend the rules! They tip scales to benefit themselves. These brothers were the worst kind of scale-tippers!

The Message Bible describes it thus: "It was a horrible sin these young servants were committing—and right in the presence of GOD!—desecrating the holy offerings to GOD" (1 Samuel 2:17).

They failed to keep the Lord's commandments regarding sacrificial offerings. They were thieves, liars, and adulterers. The guardians of God's covenant became brokers of injustice. Their behavior was so perverse that Israelites dreaded attending worship. And Father Eli knew what was happening! 1 Samuel 2:22 states that Eli "heard everything his sons did to all Israel..."

Eli knew their actions but didn't correct them. He offered only a mild rebuke in verses 23-24: "Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all the people. No, my sons! For it is not a good report that I hear. You make the LORD's people transgress."

That's all! Eli needed to discipline those boys severely. Parents must discipline their children. I know laws are changing, making it illegal to spank children. But I'll tell you this—if those laws existed during my childhood, my father would still be on Death Row! Anyone understand what I'm saying?

## **A Quest for the Ark**

Because Eli was too weak to oppose injustice, God raised up the Philistines who dominated Israel. After several defeats, someone finally tired of being the underdog and spoke up. The message was brief but accurate: "The only way to win is to reclaim God's presence. Let's retrieve God's Ark! With the Ark, God will fight for us because He's on our side, and we'll defeat the Philistines." That's what they said.

It sounds logical, doesn't it? Reconnect with God and victory follows. But one problem existed. They sent the sin-riddled, lying, thieving, adulterous brothers with the Levites to retrieve the ark. They sent the wrong people! It's like a bank manager hiring a known safe-cracker as head of security! He's the wrong person for the job!

Hophni and Phinehas now possessed God's Ark. Israel entered battle with renewed confidence because God was with them, but what happened? Another defeat! They had God's presence but lacked His power. Why? Because God's power follows obedience.

## **A Tragic Ending!**

Israel's defeat was devastating. Many died and God's Ark was captured. A messenger ran to Shiloh with news for Eli, the High Priest. Eli, old, nearly blind, and overweight, sat in his judgment seat awaiting war news. The messenger arrived, and Eli asked about the battle. The reply: defeat, and both his sons were slain on the same day.

The news hurt Eli, but he endured it.

- His nation's defeat hurt him... but he bore that
- His sons' deaths hurt him... but he bore that
- Then the messenger delivered the final blow: God's Ark was taken, the Lord's presence gone; God no longer dwelt among them... THAT HE COULDN'T BEAR!

Consider this: You can accept your nation's defeat, your people's demise, your family's destruction. The only thing you cannot accept is God's departure.

- We've survived defeats
- We've survived being used, abused, misused, and refused
- We've survived losing loved ones
- We've survived job losses

- BUT WE CANNOT SURVIVE LOSING GOD!

I can lose my name, money, family. But Lord, I cannot lose you! I can manage without money, handle loneliness, cope without identity. But I cannot exist without God. I can't live without Him. I cannot live without His Presence! Losing Him means losing everything.

When Eli heard about the Ark's capture, he threw himself backward. He didn't fall—he deliberately pitched backward, broke his neck, and died. Eli knew living without God was worse than death.

Whatever happens, with the Lord, I can overcome. God can transform any situation. I just need to know I have the Lord. With God, I have hope! With God, I have possibilities! With God, I have something to strive for, something to anticipate!

BUT WITHOUT HIM! I CAN'T IMAGINE A FUTURE WITHOUT HIM! IT WOULD BE HOPELESS! TRAGIC! DEVASTATING!

### **A Child is Born**

Scripture tells us that around this time, Eli's daughter-in-law, Phinehas's wife, was about to give birth. Someone delivered the unthinkable news: her father-in-law and husband were dead. She endured that. But learning about God's Ark being taken—that she couldn't bear.

She went into labor, experiencing intense pain, and delivered a son. Her friends tried encouraging her: "Take heart, you've given birth to a son; you have a baby boy." But thinking of her husband, father-in-law, and God's Ark—contemplating God's departure from Israel—scripture says "she regarded it not." She lost her will to live because she'd lost God.

She named the baby Ichabod, meaning "the Lord has departed from Israel." The Lord was gone. What a tragic day! If the story ended here, it would make a terrible movie. Thankfully, that's not the conclusion. There is an antidote for Ichabod.

### **An Antidote for Ichabod**

An antidote counteracts poison's harmful effects. An ANTIDOTE remedies evil. An antidote reverses circumstances. Thank God today; I know a name that neutralizes Ichabod. Ichabod means God has gone. But there is an ANTIDOTE for Ichabod.

The antidote for down is Up! For darkness, light! For bad, good! For fear, courage! For weakness, strength! For sin, salvation! For despair, hope! For hate, love! For sorrow, joy!

- For Ahab, it's Elijah
- For Pharaoh, it's Moses
- For Herod Philip, it's John the Baptist
- For David, it's Nathan

- For Ananias and Sapphira, it was the Holy Spirit

There's also an antidote for Ichabod. Find it in the gospels—specifically Matthew. Matthew 1:23 declares, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which means, God with us."

- Ichabod means God has departed. Emmanuel means God has arrived!
- Ichabod means God disappeared. Emmanuel means God has reappeared!
- Ichabod means God is unavailable. Emmanuel means God is very near!

Our transitions need not overwhelm us, because God remains with us. He will lead, direct, and accompany us throughout the entire process.

## **The Antidote: From Ichabod to Emmanuel**

### **1 Samuel 4:18-22**

#### **Key Kingdom Principle**

Change happens, but transition is a process that requires divine guidance and personal adjustment.

#### **Understanding Change vs. Transition**

##### **1. Nature of Change**

- Inevitable life reality
- Can be sudden or gradual
- Sometimes controlled, sometimes not
- Different from transition
- Always happening

##### **2. Transition Process**

- Psychological journey
- Involves letting go
- Requires adjustment
- God-ordained movement
- Strategic repositioning

#### **The Leadership Crisis**

##### **1. Eli's Situation**

- Virtuous but weak leader
- Failed to confront corruption
- Unable to discipline sons
- Lost divine authority
- Compromised leadership

##### **2. The Core Problem**

- Leaders without relationship
- Position without proximity
- Knowledge without intimacy

- Heritage without connection
- Titles without anointing

## **The Anointing Principle**

### **1. Requirements for Anointing**

- Personal relationship with God
- Close proximity to the Anointer
- Beyond mere education
- Hands-on connection
- Intimate knowledge of God

### **2. Results of Missing Anointing**

- Corrupt leadership
- Powerless presence
- Failed mission
- Lost authority
- Spiritual defeat

## **The Tragic Progression**

### **1. Loss Sequence**

- National defeat
- Family destruction
- Personal tragedy
- Spiritual departure
- Divine absence

### **2. Ultimate Crisis**

- Loss of God's presence
- Departure of glory
- Birth of Ichabod
- Spiritual darkness
- Complete devastation



## **The Divine Antidote**

### **God's Solution for Every Loss:**

- For Down → Up
- For Darkness → Light
- For Bad → Good
- For Fear → Courage
- For Weakness → Strength
- For Sin → Salvation
- For Despair → Hope
- For Hate → Love
- For Sorrow → Joy

### **Remember**

Emmanuel (God with us) is the ultimate antidote for Ichabod (the glory has departed). When God is present, transitions become opportunities, changes become victories, and losses become gains. "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which means, God with us." (Matthew 1:23)