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Has the Glory

Departed?

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Series: God's Living Legends (Part 1)

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As difficult as it is to understand, and as antagonistic as the thought is to the unbelieving mind, the truth is that failure is a necessary part of the Christian experience. Sometimes it is the result of wrong choices we have made, but at other times it is an experience engineered by a loving God to prepare the way for *real* victory. In both cases God uses failure perhaps as much as any other thing to mold His child into His likeness. The big question is, “How do we respond to failure or defeat?” or “What do we do when we go spiraling down from a spiritual high or lose an intense, spiritual struggle?” Do we respond with the Freddie Phlegmatic extreme and write it off as just one of the “all things of life” and pay no attention at all? Or do we panic and begin attacking the enemy in our own strength in an act of rash retaliation? Both of these extremes lead to further, unnecessary defeat. Most of the time, all God wanted was our attention, and He chose to use the humiliation of defeat to get it. It is this kind of situation that forms the backdrop for this study as we look again at the Living Legend of Samuel. We look at one of God’s great men in greatly troubled times. The title is, “How Could It Go Wrong When It Seemed so Right?”

I- GOD’S PROBLEM

First of all, God had a problem. You may not have known that, but God had a problem with a people who had no leader. As always, the enemy surrounded them on every side. Some commentators, in fact, believe that Israel was actually under Philistine control at the time of Samuel’s childhood. We do know one thing: the enemy was very real and very powerful and very present.

We know some other things about the spiritual climate in Israel at that time. First of all, we know from chapter 3:1 that the word of the Lord was very precious in those days and there was no open vision. In all likelihood it was because of the hardness of people’s hearts. Therefore, God had withdrawn the

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open revelation of His word to create by its very scarcity a greater hunger for every word He spoke.

The second thing we know about the spiritual climate in Samuel's day is that God's man, Eli, had failed. He had failed to raise up a godly successor. He had failed to adequately call a halt to his unbelieving sons' direct assault on the reputation of God and the direct abuse of the privileges of the priesthood. God's man Eli had failed. God's people paid the price, as they so often do when God's man fails.

The third thing we shall see is that with God's word scarce and God's man failing, God's people had lost their way spiritually. They were adrift on a sea of spiritual turbulence with no anchor and no compass. So God had a problem. *It was a people problem.*

Now people problems are the only kinds of problems God really ever has because the circumstances of life bend to God's command. But people, by virtue of His divine design, have a free will. They can choose. So God had a people problem. But God has a solution to people problems in case you haven't noticed. If God's man or woman does not respond to His leading, God sometimes simply raises up a new man or woman who will. So we see enter onto the stage in God's drama of life, God's man of the hour. We have a new Living Legend. He is a man named Samuel.

II- GOD'S MAN

Samuel, you recall, was God's miracle from the first day his heart began to thump on planet earth. His mother, Hannah, had no children. She cried out in desperation to the Lord, and promised God that if He would give her a son, she would give him back to God. So God gave her a miracle child. She called him Samuel and literally gave him back to God. We learned in the last lesson that the child became a servant in the house of God. He became a doorkeeper. By becoming a servant, he was enrolled in God's academy of spiritual leadership. In chapter 3:10, we read how Samuel, God's miracle, responded to God's call. At the prompting of Eli the priest, he simply responded, "Speak, Lord for thy servant heareth." Thus Samuel became available for God to use as God saw fit. There we take up now as God responds to Samuel's response. Turn to I Samuel 3 beginning with verse 10,

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And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth.

And the LORD said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle.

In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end.

For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.

And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever.

And Samuel lay until the morning, and opened the doors of the house of the LORD. And Samuel feared to show Eli the vision.
(I Samuel 3:10-15)

So God's first word to Samuel was a word of judgment concerning Samuel's spiritual father, Eli. God said, "Samuel, I am about to get My people's attention again. When I begin to move, their very ears will tingle. I have warned Eli that judgment must come to his house and judgment will come. Once I begin, I won't stop until I am through. I must remove the authority of the priesthood from the family of Eli forever." The next morning Samuel arose to open the doors to God's house. He was not anxious at all to share with Eli the news bulletin he had received the night before from God's Associated Press. Suddenly, the phone rang in the church office. We read in verse 16, *then Eli called Samuel*. He said, "Samuel, my son." Samuel answered, "Here I am." Eli asked, "What is this thing that the Lord has told you? Don't hide it from me. If you hide it, then God do so to you and more also." Samuel told him every word that God said. Eli said, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seems good."

Now underline that last phrase of verse 18 in your Bible. Eli may have made some horrible mistakes where his sons were concerned, but he had a handle on the sovereignty of God. He communicated to Samuel at this very tense moment of his life a principle that stood him in good stead for the rest of his ministry. Now the principle is that when God speaks, listen, because what God decides is always best. It may not be what you wanted Him

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to say. God doesn't read from our scripts. It may be, in fact, that God from His word is saying the one thing you prayed you would never hear Him say. It may be a word of judgment as it was for Eli. It may be a word of warning or an expression of displeasure of sin. But my friend, forget about E. F. Hutton. When God speaks, listen and don't argue. He always knows what is best. If His will is in conflict with ours, it is only because we are wrong.

Eli had just received confirmation that his family was to be destroyed and the priesthood was to be taken forever from his household. I hate to imagine what my response would have been. Listen as he answered, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seems best to Him."

Maybe you have been struggling with the disease of bitterness over life's seemingly harsh circumstances. You may be crying out to God either verbally or internally, "Unfair!" Why don't you stop right now and quietly submit to an errorless God. Respond in triumph by your will, "It is the Lord, whatever He does is best." It will set you free.

So Samuel, God's miracle, surrendered to God's call. Through Eli, he saw what it means to surrender to God's will. Now he began to grow spiritually because he began to surrender to God's word. Let's begin at verse 19:

And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground.

And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the LORD.

And the LORD appeared again in Shiloh: for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD.
(I Samuel 3:19-21)

Here is another beautiful verse to memorize, *And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground.* Wouldn't you like that to be said of you? Do you know what that means? It means that Samuel only spoke what God spoke. Whatever God's word said, Samuel said. When God's word stopped, Samuel stopped. So to Samuel, God's word was final. There was no more, no less, no other. Samuel was never embarrassed or ashamed of what he had spoken. Every word came true because every word came from the One who was truth. At a time when God's word was precious, Samuel stood by the book and the book stood him in good stead.

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Have you noticed that when you confront people or counsel people directly from Scripture, provided that you do it in love, you never have any regrets? That is because none of God's word ever falls to the ground. It is our opinions, our philosophies, even our theology that sometime leaves us and others with incurable heartburn over our advice. Stay with the Word. The Word will stay. The result was that all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel was a prophet of the Lord. All Israel knew that Samuel spoke for God. How did they know? Because he only spoke God's word.

Beloved, when the names of God's spokesmen have fallen into their rightful places in the church's hall of history, we will not see rise to greatness the names of the clever or the orator or the dramatic. We will not see men recognized by the size of their audiences or their vocabularies. They will find their recognition on one count: *How faithful were they to the word of God?* Thousands of preachers have come and gone. Thousands of teachers have come and gone. Thousands of theologians have come and gone. The flamboyant, the dramatic, even the super intelligent will not leave their mark. The only pen that writes indelibly on the pages of history and on the tablets of human hearts is the pen that writes the word of God. It is filled with indelible ink. It writes with the finest of points. Its supply of ink will never run dry.

Samuel was God's miracle. He answered God's call. He understood God's sovereignty. He lived and died by God's word. Sure, God had a problem, a people problem. *Ah, but God had a man.* He always does. God's problem meant that God's man was going to have to encounter God's enemy before his people would awaken from their slumber. God doesn't call His choice soldiers to write publicity folders from the barracks about how good life is in the army. God is looking for warriors, because He is involved in a war. It is a real war. It is a war against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Occasionally God sends His children into battles He knows they will lose. You say, "What did you say?" I said, occasionally God sends His children into battles He *knows* they will lose because God is not interested in just winning battles, He is interested in winning the war. Sometimes the only way He can get our attention is when we are face down in the dust with the enemy's footprint on our back. Suddenly we look up and say,

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“Oh, hi, God, where have you been?” Now we are ready to listen to whatever He has to say. Now listen to what He had to say to the Israelites in chapter 4:1:

And the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out against the Philistines to battle, and pitched beside Ebenezer: and the Philistines pitched in Aphek.

And the Philistines put themselves in array against Israel: and when they joined battle, Israel was smitten before the Philistines: and they slew of the army in the field about four thousand men.
(I Samuel 4:1,2)

III- GOD'S ENEMIES

So the Israelis were soundly defeated at the hands of the Philistines. They were defeated in a battle that God had led them into Himself. The word of the Lord came to Samuel, the word of Samuel to all Israel, and all Israel marched into battle. They proceeded to look like a third-string, high school football squad playing in a Super Bowl. Four thousand men perished. Now God was not unconcerned about those 4,000, but God was trying to save a nation, and the judgment of God was on the nation He was trying to save.

Have you ever marched into a situation where you were simply sure that it was the will of God, only to find yourself fortunate to escape with your very life? Then what did you do? Did you kick yourself for misreading the will of God? Maybe you didn't misread the will of God. Maybe God led you into that business deal knowing that you would lose it all, only to find something far more valuable than success. Maybe God led you into that vocation knowing that when you found out that you couldn't do it, you would turn to Him. God does not lead us into sin. He does not tempt men, neither can He be tempted. But He may lead us into failure, even spiritual defeat, if that is what it takes to get our attention for ultimate spiritual victory. The key is how we handle it when the smoke begins to clear and we have nothing to show for the conflict but battle scars. What do we do next? I trust it is not what the Israelis did. Let's continue with verse 3:

And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, Wherefore hath the LORD smitten us to day before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies.

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So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from thence the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth between the cherubims: and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.

And when the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again. (I Samuel 4:3-5)

Now this is one of the vital points of this story. Israel had gone into battle and lost. Listen to their logic. Question, "What do we do now?" Answer, "Go get the ark of the covenant. It will save us from our enemies." Now the gravity of Israel's error may not be evident to the casual observer. You may say, "Well, wasn't the ark the symbol of God's presence?" Yes. "Didn't His presence lead them to victory in the past?" Yes. "Then will not its very presence insure their victory again?" No.

And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, What meaneth the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews? And they understood that the ark of the LORD was come into the camp.

And the Philistines were afraid, for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore.

Woe unto us! who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty Gods? these are the Gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness.

Be strong, and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants unto the Hebrews, as they have been to you: quit yourselves like men, and fight.

And the Philistines fought, and Israel was smitten, and they fled every man into his tent: and there was a very great slaughter; for there fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen.

And the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain. (I Samuel 4:6-11)

Now I don't know about you, but this isn't the way I thought it was going to turn out. I know it was not the way they thought it was going to turn out. The ark makes its appearance on the scene, and at first the enemy trembles with fright. Then, realizing that they were fighting the Living God, God's enemy stirs up all its courage and comes in for the kill. Thirty thousand

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Israeli footmen perished in this battle. The rest of the army fled in absolute panic. The ark of God was captured, and Eli's two sons were killed. Why? Didn't they have the ark? Weren't they fighting God's enemy? Yes. But God could not bless this effort for at least 5 reasons.

1- God had not told them to take the ark into the battle in the first place. In fact, God hadn't even told them to *go* into battle this time. They had just lost a battle that God had led them into, in order to get their attention. Now, instead of falling to their knees in humiliation and repentance and staying there until God's power returned, they took something that God had used in the past and marched into battle as though they couldn't lose. Have you ever done that? Have you ever suffered a spiritual setback and then, when God had your attention, instead of falling to your knees before Him to find His heart, you came up with a system of five steps to spiritual victory or Samuel's Saints Super Spiritual Checklist. Though all of those things may have been used before in your life, God wasn't getting your attention so that you could apply Plan X. He wanted to get you to look at Him.

2- A believer out of the will of God is much more vulnerable than an unbeliever in warfare. Satan is not crazy enough to wound his own. But if you go out without your armor on, don't expect the enemy to give you a pat on the back or a hug. You are defenseless outside of God's will. The best you can do is lose a battle or two so that you can wake up and realize that you left your suit of armor at home.

3- Phinehas and Hophni were official escorts for the ark's excursion. First of all, they weren't believers. Secondly, they had defiled the name of God. Thirdly, they were scheduled for judgment. Otherwise, they were heroes. You see, God doesn't honor systems. He honors His word and people. That is why He intentionally sets standards of moral leadership in the church. He won't bless even the finest of programs if the men who administer them are not right with Him.

4- They were trusting the ark to save them, rather than the God of the ark. That ark never saved anyone. That ark was nothing more than a wooden box made of acacia wood four feet by two and half feet by two and a half feet covered with gold. It was nothing more, that is, until God's presence made it everything. But the power was not in the box, the power was in God. When

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it was being used of God, there was nothing it could not be used to do. Enemies fell to its right. Enemies fell to its left. But when the power was attributed to it, the power vanished, for it had no power at all in and of itself.

That, you see, is where the church of the Lord Jesus Christ has so often strayed from the mark and failed to leave its mark in the process. We see God use the four spiritual laws, so we deify the four spiritual laws until we think the power is in them. We see God use a certain Scripture memory system and we deify it. We then think the system possesses power in itself. God uses a denomination and then we deify that denomination and God ceases to use or bless it as He once did before. We see God use certain people and we deify those people as we give to them glory which belongs only to God. We deprive them of their power and God of His glory. There is no power in the system. There is no power in the methods. There is no power in the organizations or even in the people in and of themselves. The power, all of the power, belongs to God. The system, the methods, the church, the people, are tools God may or may not choose to use. But you give any of them the glory and their glory may cease to be.

Do you see Israel's problem now? No longer were they trusting in who God is, now they were trusting what God had used. He therefore removed His power and there was nothing left but defeat.

5- They were presumptuously expecting victory as though God owed it to them. After all, they were His children. It was His enemy, His ark, His reputation. They presumed that an immediate victory was His only feasible course of action. So did the apostles just before Calvary. It never dawned on them that a cross had to come before a crown. Oh, the fine line between faith and presumption. Faith says, "Lord, You can do anything, so do anything You like." Presumption says, "Lord, You can do anything, so do this and this and that. It has to be Your will." Do you see the difference? Faith enthrones God. Presumption makes us God, telling Him what to do and when to do it. That is why a church has to be so careful when God begins to honor its faith and bless its ministry. It has to be careful because instead of falling to its knees in wonder and awe and humility, it can assume that this particular level of blessing is God's new standard for them. They can also assume that it is the natural result of their worthiness or their faithfulness or their system.

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All God promises us is Himself. Everything else that He gives us is pure grace. Bigger numbers, bigger buildings, bigger budgets are not necessarily written into the guarantee. He will continue to give us more of Himself. That is all that He has promised. That is all we need.

So this was not a battle God's men were equipped to win. Having been led into a losing skirmish to get their attention, they should have fallen on their faces before God and awaited His next instructions. So should we. Instead, armed in the flesh with spiritual tools, they set out in their own strength to do it their way. As always, their way was a disaster.

I don't know if you can relate to this experience or not, possibly not. It looks like a page out of my life's notebook. But the story isn't over. There is a domino effect when you fight God's battles in the flesh. There were a few more dominoes yet to fall.

And there ran a man of Benjamin out of the army, and came to Shiloh the same day with his clothes rent, and with earth upon his head.

And when he came, lo, Eli sat upon a seat by the wayside watching: for his heart trembled for the ark of God. And when the man came into the city, and told it, all the city cried out.

And when Eli heard the noise of the crying, he said, What meaneth the noise of this tumult? And the man came in hastily, and told Eli.

Now Eli was ninety and eight years old; and his eyes were dim, that he could not see.

And the man said unto Eli, I am he that came out of the army, and I fled to day out of the army. And he said, What is there done, my son?

And the messenger answered and said, Israel is fled before the Philistines, and there hath been also a great slaughter among the people, and thy two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God is taken.

And it came to pass, when he made mention of the ark of God, that he fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died: for he was an old man, and heavy. And he had judged Israel forty years.

(I Samuel 4:12-18)

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Bad news travels fast. There arrived in the city a Benjaminite Western Union boy with the preview of the six o'clock news. It was a disaster. The whole city cried out in anguish. Eli heard the noise and asked for his own personal report. Now ladies, this is how your husband feels when he walks in the door in the evening and innocently asks, "What happened today, dear?" You proceed to tell him, "Johnny tested Mr. Brown's plate glass window and lost. The plumber came, but he couldn't fix the leak, so he left a boat in the hallway. Dear, today's visit to the emergency room was a bargain, two kids got treated at once. Dear, the man said the fender can't be repaired but it can be replaced." "What fender?" he asks. "Oh, the one that stopped the motorcycle that had the right of way." You know the feeling. Then that sweet smile comes with, "And how was your day, dear?" We men just aren't strong enough for sudden disaster reports. Neither was Eli.

IV- GOD'S GLORY

By now, Eli was even older than I am and he was shaped like a basketball. When he heard the news that 30,000 were dead, the ark was captured and his sons were dead, the old butterball fell off his chair, rolled over, broke his neck and died. Exit Eli. Meanwhile, the TV set in the Shiloh General Hospital was on channel 7 and Eli's daughter-in-law, Phinehas' wife, turned on the evening news and another domino falls. Verse 19

And his daughter in law, Phinehas' wife, was with child, near to be delivered: and when she heard the tidings that the ark of God was taken, and that her father in law and her husband were dead, she bowed herself and travailed; for her pains came upon her.

And about the time of her death the women that stood by her said unto her, Fear not; for thou hast borne a son. But she answered not, neither did she regard it.

And she named the child Ichabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel: because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father in law and her husband.

And she said, The glory is departed from Israel: for the ark of God is taken. (I Samuel 4:19-22)

So Mrs. Phinehas, upon hearing the news, went into labor, delivered the child and apparently died of a heart attack in the process. Proctor and Gamble could go crazy with this story. But before she died, she named her baby boy. What a name she

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hung on him. She named the boy “Ichabod”, meaning inglorious, saying that the glory had departed from Israel because the ark of God was gone and her father-in-law and husband had died. The glory had departed from Israel. Had it? What do you think? Have you ever written Ichabod over a life, maybe yours or someone else’s? That is a dangerous thing to do. Be careful when you assume that the glory has departed.

What is the glory anyway? Here is a definition to chew on:

The glory of God is the awesomeness of the character of God which is the expression of His presence which only draws attention to His person.

So when the angels sang “glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good will toward men”, they were saying that the awesomeness of God’s presence had come in human form and He would at all times reflect the character of God, so that everything He did would glorify the Father and draw attention to the Father. Thus, ultimately He would bring peace on earth and good will toward men. It is further described in John 1:14 -*And the word was made flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory.* This was the essence of His character which drew attention to the Father. It was the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Everything Jesus said, everything Jesus did, reflected the awesomeness of the presence of God by demonstrating the character of God. Thus, everything He did and everything He said drew attention only to the Father. Every time He spoke, every time He moved, He glorified the Father. So the glory never departed from Jesus.

Moses said to the Father, “Show me Thy glory.” The Father showed him a portion of His presence and accompanied it with an explanation of His character. He said, “I AM...” Jesus said of the Father in John 17:4, “*I have glorified Thee on earth,*” or, “I have called attention to Your character in Me. I finished the work You gave me to do, to lead men to You. Now, Father, glorify Me with Your own self. Reveal Your presence with the glory I had before the world was.” Now what was that? Verse 1 - *Father, the hour has come, glorify Thy Son.* What hour? God was about to allow His Son to taste defeat, to be humiliated, to be crucified, to be separated from Himself by sin, our sin, that through defeat there might come, what? Glory. In that hour, the awesomeness of the character of God would reveal the presence of God and draw

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attention only to the person of God. Then He would be glorified. Jesus would return to that state of being with the Father where sin did not exist and where nothing competed with the character of God nor drew attention from the person of God.

When we get our glorified bodies we will understand glory, but in the meantime, the glory will not depart from the Christian, for the glory of God is now in a person, the Holy Spirit. He will never leave you and no man can take Him from you. The glory will not depart from you. The joy may depart, the peace may depart, the power may depart, for they are manifestations of His glory; but the glory has not departed, you have only interrupted the glory cycle.

Do you remember what the glory cycle is? It works like this: God declares His glory by revealing His character through His Holy Spirit in your life. His desire is that by yielding to Him you give the glory back to God and complete the cycle. You can, however, interrupt the cycle in two ways. As sin enters your life, the Holy Spirit is quenched and a wet blanket is placed over the glory of God. His glory has not departed, but it can't be seen. Because of sin, others' attention is not drawn to Him by the awesomeness of His character. So the glory cycle is interrupted. The second way the glory cycle can be interrupted is when you steal the glory from God. God demonstrates His character, reveals His presence in your life and the occasion exists for men and women to have their attention drawn to God. But you fail to give the glory to God either by choice or neglect, and you accept the glory for the things that He has done. The glory has not departed, but you accepted glory that belongs to Him, so God is not glorified in you.

But the glory cycle when it works, works like this: God does a work in your life and you step back and let Him. He produces in you the fruit of the Spirit. You then simply glorify Him, quietly, lovingly, allowing His character to call attention to Himself. As you glorify Him, He proceeds to multiply His fruit in your life and you proceed to give Him more glory. This continues until you become increasingly like Jesus and your every word, your every work simply draws attention to His character, revealing His presence and accruing more glory to Him. There is less and less of you and more and more of Him. We must decrease, He must increase. That my friends is living.

Now maybe the glory cycle in your life has been interrupted.

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Perhaps this has gone on for months or even years. Maybe you received Christ when you were younger and never really lived out your life to accrue glory to God. Maybe you have even written “Ichabod” over your heart and decided that the glory has departed. Not so, my friend, not so. It is the enemy that writes “Ichabod” over men’s lives in an effort to deceive them. If you have received the glory of God in the form of Jesus Christ, the glory has not departed from your life and never will. The glory cycle has been interrupted, but when you trusted Christ, He placed a portion of His glory in your life and it will be there until you give it back to Him and multiply that glory, or until you go home to glory and find out it has been there all along.

What better time than right now to tear down that sign, “Ichabod”, over the doorpost of your heart and erect a new sign that reads, “Glory to God in the highest”, *for the glory has not departed*. Right now you can ask Him to demonstrate His character, revealing His presence in your life and promise by His grace to return all the glory all the time to Him. Promise not to give the glory to your goodness, not even to your badness, not to you at all, just to Him.

If you have never trusted Christ with your heart, maybe even postponing that decision again and again until you have been deceived into thinking that it is too late for you, or if you have written “Ichabod” over your life, thinking that the glory will never belong to you, I have good news. The glory is waiting to enter your life right now. His name is Jesus Christ. He will forgive you. He will cleanse you. He will love you. He will give you His glory forever if you will simply ask Him into your heart. And the glory will never depart.

It is Satan who cries, “Ichabod, the glory has departed.” We say like the Israelites, “Circumstances are dim, feelings are numb, God must have evacuated the premises.” The Apostle Peter has a better idea in I Peter 5:7 when he says,

Cast all of your cares upon Him because He cares about you.

Be sober, be vigilant; because your enemy, the devil, as a roaring lion is looking for someone to devour.

But the God of grace who has called you to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a defeat or two, will make you whole. He will reestablish you and strengthen

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you and settle you at last; to Him be the glory and dominion
forever and forever. (I Peter 5:7,8,10 paraphrase)

So....

THE GLORY HAS NOT DEPARTED

The glory has not departed
Though your spiritual eyes have grown dim,
Still within the glory lives,
For you belong to Him!

The glory has not departed;
He has not abandoned you.
Patiently, quietly, still He waits
For the glory He knows He's due.

He longs for your life to awaken
To life as He meant it to be,
He longs for those who see your life
Only His glory to see.

He wants you to yield again today
And allow Him to be your Lord;
He wants your life once more to be
Ordered in His Word.

No, the glory has not departed.
Your name is not... "Ichabod"...
Your name is Glory; *for like the glory,*
You belong to God!

Has the Glory Departed?
For Focus and Application

1- What reasons did God give for removing the mantle of leadership from Eli's household?

2- What does Eli's response tell you about his understanding of God's sovereignty?

3- God seemed to have led the children of Israel into a battle they were going to lose. Why? Does He ever do that to us? Why is it impossible for us to determine if we are in the will of God totally by circumstances? Does God ever lead us into what would be failure from the world's perspective?

4- What did the children of Israel do next? How did their logic mirror our response in similar situations? What were they trusting in to save them? What kinds of things do we tend to trust in?

5- Why do we tend to rush into spiritual conflicts when we are out of God's will? What usually happens when we do?

6- What is the difference between faith and presumption? Have you ever claimed to be walking by faith when you were, in actuality, presuming on God's grace by assuming that your will was His?

7- Phinehas' wife bore a child and died in the process. She named the child, "Ichabod". What does that mean? What caused her to misinterpret the circumstances that caused such grief and assume that the glory had departed from Israel?

8- What is the glory of God? Does it ever depart from a life, once that life has received the Son? How can the joy depart without the glory departing?

9- Have you ever assumed that God had written "Ichabod" over your life? Have you assumed that because of something you have done, or something you haven't done, that the glory has departed? Has Jesus departed? No, He will never leave you or forsake you. Then where is the glory still?

10- Stop and praise God that the glory will never depart from your life. Begin the process of giving God the glory for all He has done and is doing in you. If you have allowed unconfessed sin to quench the glory so that it cannot be seen, ask God to cleanse you and reveal the glory once again. If you have stolen God's

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glory by taking credit for what only He can do, that, too, is sin. Confess it as such, and acknowledge that apart from Him you can do nothing. Memorize I Peter 5:7. The God of glory is waiting to pick you up, strengthen you, and settle you once more.

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