

us to expect His deliverance and salvation ONLY when we are close to heaven at our last hour. Rather, He has taught us to pray in the Lord's Prayer: **"But deliver us from evil."**

What does this mean? Luther wrote: "We pray in this petition, as the sum of all, that our Father in heaven would deliver us from every evil of body and soul, of property and honor, and finally, when our last hour shall come, grant us a blessed end, and graciously take us from this vale of tears to Himself in heaven." Do you realize that when your knees bend in prayer to your Gather in heaven, Satan's knees buckle in fear?!

The Lord answered Samuel's sacrifice and prayer by **"thundering with a loud thunder upon the Philistines that day, and so confused them that they were overcome before Israel."** What should YOU expect whenever you "cry" to God with faith in Your Savior's sacrifice for you? You should expect the "thunderings" of your Lord upon your spiritual enemies! For all the powers of hell cannot stand against the soul that is built on Christ!

With great expectations you should pray as King David did when he was captured by the Philistines: **"LORD, you number my wanderings; put my tears into Your bottle; are they not in Your book? When I cry out to You, then my enemies will turn back; This I know, because God is with me."** (Ps. 56:8-9)

So, Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and shen and named it, **"Ebenezer,"** which means **"stone of help."** Then Samuel said, **"Thus far the LORD has helped us."** The Lord Jesus Christ, our best Friend, has also established a reminder of His saving help to this very day. That memorial is His Holy supper, which brings us **"The Stone of help"** – even His own body and blood. For **"as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes."** (1Cor. 11:26)

The Philistines will come upon you, dear Christian, and all the more as you try to serve the Lord only. But as often as you cry out to your God through Jesus, He will bring your enemies to confusion so that you may have victory after victory and He may be glorified forever! Amen.

8/05/12 T9

INI

1Samuel 7:5-12

Dear Fellow Redeemed by the blood of God's own Son,

When a woman conceives in her womb she expects a human baby, not a baby zebra or bird. When a person is hired for a job he expects to get paid for it. Human reason and our own life's experience teach us what to expect under a certain set of circumstances. But when it comes to our circumstances in God's kingdom of grace, our Lord must teach us what to expect

Peter said to Jesus: **"See, we have left all and followed you."** Do you suppose Peter expected some kind of blessing in following Jesus? Sure he did! Jesus taught him what to expect when He answered: **"There is no one who left house or parents or brothers or wife or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come everlasting life."** (Lk. 18:29-30)

The Israelites also had reason to expect much from the Lord. They had responded to the preaching of the Prophet Samuel in the right way. We read in the verse just before our text that **"Israel put away the Baals and the Ashtaroth, and served the LORD only."** What did Israel expect for returning to God? And

WHAT SHOULD YOU EXPECT, AS YOU SERVE THE LORD ONLY?

I.

First, you can expect the Philistines! The scene in our text is a holy gathering at Mizpah. The entire nation of Israel, God's chosen people, had come together at Samuel's command. **"They drew water and poured it out on the ground before the Lord"** to symbolize the vanity and wretchedness of their sinful lives – like water poured out that cannot be gathered up again.

They "fasted that day" and said: **"We have sinned against the LORD."** So the Israelites took shame to themselves and gave glory to God. And Samuel **"judged the children of Israel at Mizpah"** – He did not condemn them, but he assured them in the name of the LORD that their sins were forgiven.

But what happened next? The repentance and happy

worship of the Israelites at Mizpah brought immediate trouble upon them! For when **“the Philistines heard that the children of Israel had gathered at Mizpah,”** they attacked Israel!

Did Israel really expect that their enemies would leave them alone as long as they worshiped and served the LORD? It has never been like that! For when sinners repent of their sins before the Lord, and begin to follow Him in faith and love, they must expect that Satan will gather his forces all the more against them to oppose and discourage them along the way.

What should you expect if you are a young Christian who is just beginning to be a serious follower and servant of His Savior? You must expect that the Devil will raise up the “Philistines” against you. The Devil will oppose you through your friends, tempting you to neglect God’s word and follow their sinful ways. He will try to establish a pattern of self-centeredness in your life so that it becomes extra hard for you to serve your Savior and others with the time and talents He has given you.

We older Christians are attacked by the Philistines too! We try to serve our Lord in our marriages and as parents by serving the needs of our spouse and family before our own. But the devil is always troubling and discouraging our attempts with hurtful remarks, petty arguments, self-righteousness, anxiety over money and more.

We have peace in Christ and the hope of heaven, but Satan assaults us with the fear of growing old, suffering pain and death. He tries to make all our many failures and our guilt seem stronger than faith and God’s forgiving grace, so that we become discouraged. He wants us to worry that we may be consumed by our circumstances and lose the fight of faith!

Now, if the Devil can do so much to assault those who serve the LORD only, then we may as well give up and declare the Devil to be the lord and master of our souls! But no! For although we should expect more trouble from our spiritual enemies in this world,

II.

We should also expect greater help through our best Friend! It’s true that the more Israel worshiped and followed the Lord, the more certain and fierce were the attacks of her enemies.

But Israel was well-prepared to face her enemies. How so? Verse 7 tells us that when the children of Israel heard the Philistines were coming upon them, **“they were afraid.”**

Surely, as the followers of Christ, you have also been afraid of Satan’s attacks by means of your sins and the temptations that press upon you from every side? If you are aware of the power of your enemy and the weakness of your own sinful flesh, then you have been afraid of Satan’s “Philistines.”

But this is the blessed fear of the humble child of God, who feels helpless to save himself from his circumstances. This is that godly fear which looks not to its own strength, but to the strength of the LORD, even as Israel did. **“So,”** the children of Israel said to Samuel, **“do not cease to cry out to the LORD our God for us, that He may save us from the hand of the Philistines.”** (v. 8)

Then Samuel took a young lamb and offered it to the LORD, and **“cried out to the LORD and the LORD answered him.”** Samuel responded to the cries of the children of Israel. This is what Israel expected from Samuel as the one whom God had appointed and anointed to intercede for them. He was not the high priest of his people. Neither was his sacrifice prescribed by the Law. Yet God accepted both his prayer and his sacrifice on behalf of the people!

What then should you expect from Jesus Christ, your best Friend? As we are often reminded at the beginning of our worship services, **“Christ came into the world to save sinners.”** (1Tim. 1:15) He did not come on His own. Hebrews chapter 4 tells us that Jesus was sent by God the Father and anointed by the Holy Spirit to be our High Priest – to offer Himself as the One perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world, and to daily bring the prayers of God’s believing children to the throne of Grace. By raising His Son from the dead, the God of heaven has declared Jesus Christ to be our Savior from all our enemies and from every evil!

In the days when the American West was being settled, safety was only at the fort with the cavalry. The pioneers could only expect the army’s protection against Indians and thieves if they could get as far as the fort. But our heavenly Father has not told