Introduction

“One of the greatest barriers to remaining usable is the fact that God has used us in the past.”  Ron Dunn

It is easy to be proud or comfortable in our success and take God for granted.

I. Past blessings are not a guarantee of future success.  I Samuel 4:1-11

The Philistines were Israel’s main enemy during this period in their history.

• They were a seafaring people who settled in the coastal plain.
• They lived in the cities of Gaza, Gath, Ashdod, Ashkelon and Ekron.
• They knew how to work with metal and had iron chariots.

Israel dwelt primarily in the hill country. This advance by the Philistines was a serious threat to their safety. Israel went out to meet them in battle and they were defeated.

The Elders of Israel asked why? Why did the Lord bring defeat on us today?

Rather than look to God for the answer, they came up with their own answer. “Let’s bring the ark of the Lord’s covenant with us.” They assumed that where the ark was God was. But to think that God would be with them without any change of heart on their part was folly.
The results were disastrous.
• 30,000 soldiers were killed.
• The ark was captured by the Philistines.
• Hopni and Phinehas died.
• Shiloh would be destroyed.

II. God’s power cannot be manipulated by religious activity.
God is not a good luck charm.

“It is folly to think that we can count on God’s promises while paying no attention to his demands. We can’t have Jesus as Savior without having him as Lord.” John Woodhouse

“It is common for those who have estranged themselves from God to discover great fondness for rituals and relics and external observances.” Matthew Henry

They have a form of religion but not the heart.
How does that happen?
It happens when we take our eyes off of Christ and his Word.
It could happen to us, if we are not careful to walk with Christ every day.

III. The only way to ensure God’s blessing in the future is to walk with him in the present.
1 Samuel 4:12-22
When Eli heard that the ark had been captured, he fell over backwards and died. Phinehas’ pregnant wife went into labor and died. She gave birth to a son and named him, Ichabod, which means “no glory”.

The problem in Israel was that God’s glory had departed long before the ark was captured and they did not see it.

• Eli died because he was weighty.
• It is God who is to be weighty in our life.

“He must become greater. I must become less.” John 3:30

Conclusion

Past blessings are not a guarantee of future success. But past blessings can be an encouragement to trust God in the future.

God’s power cannot be manipulated by human activity.

The only way to ensure his blessing in the future is to walk with him the present.