

INTRO: Sometimes well-meaning people, Christians included, accidentally misquote the Bible. It's understandable. The Bible is a big book, it's hard to remember everything that's in there. One phrase in particular seems frequently but wrongly attributed to the Bible—"God helps those who help themselves." There's a reason that many American evangelicals in particular think that's in the Bible. It's because that phrase—God helps those who help themselves—combines our belief in God with our love for freedom and our respect for hard work and individual responsibility. If you'll turn with me in your Bibles to 1Sam 7 (page 230 in your pew bible), what we'll see is almost exactly the opposite. God helps those who cannot help themselves. In fact, God helps those who have repented from helping themselves to rely on God in Christ alone. Follow along with me in your Bibles as I read and explain 1Sam 7, and we'll draw out some applications once we understand the text itself.

7:2 *"From the day that the ark was lodged at Kiriath-jearim, a long time passed, some twenty years, and all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord.* That's the setting, in the late period of the judges, while everyone was doing what was right in his own eyes. Israel's priests—Eli and his sons Hophni and Phinehas—were corrupt, so God resolved to judge them. God was so fed up that he left the borders of Israel altogether. The Philistines thought their god Dagon had defeated Yahweh, so they took the ark and put it in Dagon's temple, only to see Yahweh submit and then decapitate Dagon. God then judged the Philistines, putting infected sores all over them, killing some of them for taking him lightly. So the Philistines moved the ark from one city to another and finally returned it to the Levites at Beth-shemesh, who themselves forget how to treat God, pay the price, and send the ark on to Kiriath-jearim, where Abinidab consecrates his son Eleazar to steward the ark. Over the next twenty years, Israel comes to her senses. *They lamented after the Lord.* What a phrase. They were sad with a sorrow that pursued God. This is not a self-centered grief, or a circumstantial grief. It is a Godward grief. They yearned for God, longed for him, sought after Him, grieved that God was gone, and that his absence was their own fault. "We drove Him away...what have we done?"

And in v.3, Samuel sees it. This is the first time we've seen Samuel since chapter 3. He sees the people's Godward grief, and that is what brings the prophet out to the people. **7:3** *And Samuel said to all the house of Israel, 'If you are returning to the Lord with all your heart, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtaroah from among you and direct your heart to the Lord and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.'* Emotion—even sorrow—is not enough. Are these crocodile tears, or something more? Even a prophet can't tell. "*If you are returning....*" The issue is returning to a reconciled, faithful, covenanted relationship with God. That idea of returning is what we mean by repenting—turning from rebellion against God, back toward submitting to God as Father.

Returning to God is a heart issue. "...with all your heart." That is actually the original requirement of the Law itself, **Dt. 6:5** *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."* If that is happening, then Samuel encourages them to give evidence that their sorrow is really about their relationship to God and not just about their feelings or their power or their prosperity or their circumstances. "*If you are returning with all your heart....*" Then he gives them **three commands** to prove and legitimate their sorrow as repentant. This is how we will all know. First a negative command—*put away* the foreign gods [Baals—storm gods to make crops grow] and goddesses [Ashtaroah—goddesses of fertility]. Then a self-oriented or internal command—*direct your heart to the Lord*. Then a positive or external command—*serve Him only*. Put away...direct...serve. These are God's conditions for our reconciliation with Him. These are not the causes of reconciliation, but they are the conditions,¹ the

¹ Dale Ralph Davis, FOTB, 74.
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terms God sets...and they are non-negotiable. Are you returning? We'll see. The proof will be in their priorities, loyalties, behaviors, affections. Put away, direct your heart, serve him only. This is a call to repent, to turn back toward obedience to the first commandment, No other gods.

Notice as well that these three commands press human responsibility, moral accountability. No one can do those things for Israel. God doesn't do them for Israel. God doesn't put away their gods for them. Israel has to do that. Israel is even responsible for the direction of her own heart. Set your heart to seek God. King Jehoshaphat set his heart to seek God in 2Chron 19:3. King Hezekiah prayed in 2Ch 30:19 'may the Lord pardon everyone who sets his heart to seek God, the Lord, the God of his fathers'; Ezr 7:10 "Ezra set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel." You could do THAT in the OLD covenant! (cf. Ezek 18:31). And if Israel met this condition here in 1S 7, God would reward them, *He will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines*. He will be your covenant God—He will rescue, He will protect and provide—so long as you acknowledge that you are His people, living in His house, by His rules, with heartfelt affection and exclusive loyalty for Him—all or nothing. Thankfully, Israel does the right thing. Look there in **7:4-6** "*So the people of Israel put away the Baals and the Ashtaroath, and they served the Lord only. Then Samuel said, 'Gather all Israel at Mizpah, and I will pray to the Lord for you.' So they gathered at Mizpah and drew water and poured it out before the Lord and fasted on that day and said there, 'We have sinned against the Lord.'* And Samuel judged the people of Israel at Mizpah." Twenty years had passed since the ark was captured, and only now are they finally ready to obey Samuel's commands from v.3—put away and serve. And now that their repentance is clear, Samuel says it's time for what the Puritans called a solemn assembly—a gathering of the saints for corporate prayers of confession and repentance. They're not confessing the Philistines sins, the sins of the cultures around them. They're confessing their own sins, their own guilt in falling into the sins of idolatry, adultery, coveting, and worldliness.

Here, they fast for the day together to emphasize their shared hunger for the Lord and for his word. They confess their guilt "*We have sinned*". And they confess who they've sinned against, "*against the Lord*." But why pour out water? It's connected with fasting, so the idea is at least that being reconciled to God is more important than their necessary food and water. It may also be a symbol of their own helplessness to recover themselves without God's power and mercy. A woman says to David in **2Sam 14:14** "*We must all die; we are like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again. But God will not take away life...*" Spilling water in 1S 7 is an image of Israel's situation: formless, helpless, wasted, irreversible—no retrieval or recovery, at least from a human perspective. And water is life. Spilled water symbolizes life spilled out, and impossible to gather back.... But not for God.

Now with all this humble confession of guilt in v.6, it feels gruff to us when we read "*And Samuel judged the people of Israel at Mizpah*." That does not mean that Samuel looked down on them or treated them judgmentally or condescendingly. After all, Samuel has just prayed for them in v.5. Samuel is not punishing them further, or adding insult to injury in v.6. It means he provided justice and mercy for them. He gave righteous decisions for their situation. He led them with godly authority, gave oversight to this meeting, governed them (HALOT, 1624), told them what to do next, how to repent and keep on repenting. But that word 'judged' also recalls what Moses did for Israel in Exodus 18. Moses judged them, decided for them and between them, "*made them know the statutes of God and his laws*" and how God's law applied to their particular situation (Ex 18:16, cf. vv.22, 26; Dt 15:1). That's what Samuel is doing here. He's being their new Moses, their new prophet. He's not condemning them; but he is leading and counseling them by applying God's law to their situation. He's leading them in how to confess, how

to repent, what to do about what they've done and how they feel, and leading them in evaluating and discerning the genuineness of their own repentance.

Meanwhile in v.7, the Philistines mistake Israel's gathering for confession as if they were mustering the troops for war. Or maybe they just think it's an opportune time to strike, now that Israel is all in one place. Look there in **7:7-11** "*Now when the Philistines heard that the people of Israel had gathered at Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the people of Israel heard of it, they were afraid of the Philistines. And the people 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.'* So Samuel took a nursing lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the Lord. And Samuel cried out to the lord for Israel, and the Lord answered him. As Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to attack Israel. But the Lord thundered with a mighty sound that day against the Philistines and threw them into confusion, and they were defeated before Israel. And the men of Israel went out from Mizpah and pursued the Philistines and struck them, as far as below Beth-car."

Apparently the Philistines had forgotten the heavyweight bout between Yahweh and Dagon 20 years prior. So here they come to attack Israel. This attack becomes the real test of Israel's repentance and faith. This is round 3 between Israel and the Philistines. Rounds one and two happened in chapter 4. Israel lost round one, and that's why they asked for the ark to come and save them as if it were a lucky charm. They lose round two for that very reason—they treated the symbol of God's presence as if it were separate from their covenant relationship with God based on His word of command and promise. And remember from chapter 3 how all Israel from Dan to Beersheeba (NY to LA) knew that God had established Samuel as a prophet, yet no one thought to consult Samuel during rounds one and two with the Philistines in chapter 4. So what will Israel do here in round 3? Where is their trust? Who and what will they rely on now? Are they really returning to the Lord? Is their repentance genuine?

YES! It is. They fear the Philistines, maybe because they forgot what God did to Dagon, or maybe they didn't hear about that. Regardless, the Israelites take their fears to the prophet this time, and the prophet takes those fears to God. Everything's different this time. Instead of ignoring the prophet, they ask him to pray. And instead of assuming the ark would save them, they know that it is God, personally, who must save them. Back in 4:3, they said "**bring the ark**, that **it** may save us." Now they ask Samuel, "**pray to God**, that **He** may save us..." Samuel makes the whole burnt offering to symbolize Israel's total rededication to the Lord. Just then, the Philistine army approaches. This would be like us having a national conference of Christians, a huge holy assembly of tens of thousands, maybe in an amphitheater, and a huge army gathering right across the street, armed to the teeth, locked and loaded, ready to launch, and we don't even have so much as a security detail—fish in a barrel. Israel was vulnerable here, all in one place, with broken spirits, not ready to fight.

In v.10, as the Philistines get closer and closer, suddenly "*the Lord thundered with a mighty sound that day against Philistines and threw them into confusion, and they were defeated before Israel.*" That sounds surreal to us today—premodern, maybe primitive, spooky. But the biblical doctrine of God as Creator is the only one that makes sense of the world as we see it today, and it makes sense of this historical narrative. God is the one who stores up lightning and sends thunder, and He sends it at will, as He did here. In fact, it was common for armies in the ANE to associate spectacular weather during military battles with divine favor or judgment. The Philistines confusion here reflects that attitude. The thunder is ominous to them. It puts the fear of the gods in them. It at least makes many of them think twice about

executing the attack. They lose solidarity, maybe they argue; whatever the case, now the Philistines are the vulnerable ones, and Israel is mustered up to strike them down and break free from their oppression.

7:12-14 *“Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen and called its name Ebenezer; for he said, ‘Till now the Lord has helped us.’ [The word Ebenezer is a compound word that means help-stone.] So the Philistines were subdued and did not again enter the territory of Israel. And the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. The cities that the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron to Gath, and Israel delivered their territory from the hand of the Philistines. There was peace also between Israel and the Amorites.”* They commemorate God’s goodness to them there with a stone monument at the victory site. God had helped them up to that very time and place, and this monument would remind them that God was only ever a repentance away. This victory repelled the Philistines for about a generation. It also led to restoring the regions around Ekron and Gath to Israelite rule. And general peace with other nations followed. The Amorites was a general term for Canaanites. That’s actually how God referred to them with Abraham, “the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete.” And this makes sense. The Philistines were the regional power in military tech. But once Israel defeated them, Israel became big man on the block, so everyone else settled with Israel.

7:15-17 *“Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. And he went on a circuit year by year to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah. And he judged Israel in all these places. Then he would return to Ramah, for his home was there, and there also he judged Israel. And he built there an altar to the Lord.”* After leading Israel to such a spectacular revival, repentance, and victory, it was back to an ordinary life and ministry for Samuel. Every year for decades on end, from Bethel, to Gilgal, to Mizpah, then back home to backwater Ramah. By chapter 8:1 Samuel had become an old man. And in all that time in Samuel’s life, this instance, right here in chapter 7, is the only thing remarkable enough for Scripture to record. There’s more to come in the chapters to follow; but for now, Samuel is faithful to rule and decide, to govern and guide God’s people. Samuel lived most of his life not in celebrity, but faithful obscurity. And that faithfulness prepared him for what was to come very late in his life.

POINT

God helps those who turn from helping themselves to trust in Christ alone. Israel had spent generations under the judges trying to help themselves. Religious compromise, cultural accommodation, blending in, covering all their bases, seeking the storm gods and the fertility goddesses just in case Yahweh didn’t come through in the clutch. Eventually, it made their approach to the true God nothing more than superstition, a good luck charm. So God gave them years, decades even, to bring them to lament after the Lord, repent from helping themselves, and to rely on Him alone. He brings them to admit that they cannot help themselves, any more than spilled water can put itself back in a bottle. Then, then God helps them.

APPLICATIONS

1. When is the last time you—we—lamented after the Lord? 7:2. Some evangelicals have tried to make out any Christian sorrow to be a deficiency in faith, or relegate it to the era of law. But this is not just an OT thing. There’s a difference between lamenting after yourself, your pleasures, your successes, your conveniences, and lamenting after the Lord. And this distinction holds up in the NT. **2Cor 7:10-11** *godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter.”* Sin happens in churches, in Christians. The question is,

what happens after that? How do we feel about it and what do we do about it. Worldly grief grieves itself to death. It only wants to make the pain go away, and it will do anything to put itself out of its misery.

That is not the kind of sorrow we're talking about here. This lamenting after the Lord is the godly kind of grief that is grieved into repenting. It's a grief that's not about losing something in this world. It's a grief about losing something we had with God—a communion with him, an intimacy, a contentedness in his love, an attentiveness to His every word, a sense of his presence, how we put a premium on nearness with him, and the blessedness of obedience to him. Lamenting after the Lord is sorrow at losing those things, and a longing for God to restore Himself to us. And this kind of lamenting will part with any sin to see the Lord return to us with a sense of his presence and love and care, His Fatherly provision and protection and power working for our good. Friend, when you sin, and you grieve, what is that grief about? What are you lamenting after? Are you lamenting after the Lord, or something else you lost because of your sin?

2. Jesus demands your whole heart no less than the law. When Samuel counseled Israel to return to the Lord with all their heart, he was echoing the demand of Dt 6:5, Love the Lord your God with all your heart. And Jesus said that is the first and greatest commandment in Matt 22:37. But he had already applied the devotion of the Great Commandment to Himself when he said in **Matt 10:37-38** “*Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.*” There goes our devotion to the modern fertility cult. The nuclear family is biblically and socially important... and yet it is not the gospel. Young parents, we are ecstatic with you over your new babies. We love your children with you. And we warn you that as valuable as your babies are, Jesus deserves your heart infinitely more than your children. Parenting is only part of your discipleship to Christ. Jesus expects and commands your exclusive reliance, personal loyalty, ultimate love, and devoted worship (D.R. Davis, FOTB, 73).

3. Is our sorrow verified by our repentance? (7:2-3; so also Baldwin 84; DR Davis 72). Samuel was not satisfied with mere sorrow, even though that sorrow was aimed at pursuing the Lord. He gave them three commands to demonstrate that they were really repenting, really returning to God with a whole heart. Put away your false gods. Direct your heart to the Lord. Serve Him only. Isn't this just what Paul tells us to do in Christ, “*put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness*” (Eph 4:22-24). Put off the old, renew your mind, put on the new. Put away your gods, direct your heart, serve God only. These are the three categories or steps of repentance, and they happen together. There's the **negative** of putting off old idols, old sins, old ways, old identifications. But putting sin away is only the beginning of sanctification. Then there's the **internal** heart set, setting our hearts on God in Christ, renewing our minds by His truth to think and love as He does. And then there's the positive and external serving of God and putting on that new identity and living out that new nature God gives us in union with Christ. Let's drill down on directing your heart.

4. Have you taken responsibility to direct your heart toward God in Christ (7:3). “*Direct your heart to the Lord.*” Joshua commanded Israel in a similar way, Josh 24:23 *Incline your heart to the Lord.* The Psalmist prayed for it in 119:36 *Incline my heart to your testimonies.* Solomon tells his son not only to incline his ear to wisdom in Prov 2:2, but in Prov 23:26 “*My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe my ways.*” (22:17). Ezra set his heart to study and obey God's word. One of God's main indictments of his people through Jeremiah is “*they did not incline their ear, but everyone walked in the stubbornness of his evil heart*” (Jer 7:24; 11:8). Over and over again, God, in the Bible, holds you

responsible for directing your heart to God in Christ. Friend, the last thing you should be doing with your heart is following it. God's word says you should be directing your heart to follow the Lord. You do that by deliberately forming godly habits. You structure your life and your relationships around God's word and God's people. You steer your priorities and affections. You guard

5. Corporate Confession is biblical and healthy. This gathering in v.5 is what the Puritans called a "Solemn Assembly." The whole reason Israel gathered here was to confess, repent, and be restored to God. This text models corporate confession. This is one reason we have a prayer of confession during our normal services. It's also a reason that we pray through application points of the sermons on Sunday nights. We want to grow together in repenting together. We want it to be normal for us to talk about our own sins in ways that seek repentance and restoration with God. This model of corporate confession is also a reason we encourage you to develop a few close confessing friendships among other trusted members in the congregation. Look at how good this was for God's people. It restored them to God and led to a fresh work of God's power among them.

6. Do you think you are too sinful to ask God to save you from your sins again? (7:2, 7-8; so also Baldwin 87). Christian I'm talking to you here. Twenty years of sin, sorrow, and prophetic silence in Israel. And those two decades followed the first 6 chapters when Samuel was becoming a man, while Eli and his sons were being corrupt, while the ark had been captured. These are long, bad, sad years where Israel felt forsaken and forgotten by God. But God had not forgotten. He cannot forget his people. He will discipline and rebuke them. He will hide himself for a time, remain aloof from us, will relate sternly with us because of our sins. But he will not forsake His people. Friend, sinner, God can save even you, from even your sins; and he loves to save. (cf. **2Cor 10:3-5**).

7. Take your fears to Jesus. (7:7-8; so also DR Davis 76). Israel's people were afraid of the Philistines in v.7, and they took that fear to Samuel and asked him to pray for them, that God would save them from what they feared. Now that Israel had first been saved from their own sin and lack of repentance, they were free to cry out to Samuel to pray for their salvation from the aggression of their enemies. So if you are still an enemy of God and his people, this privilege is not for you. If you are unrepentant in your sin, trusting in a superstitious way of relating to God, you have some repenting to do as well. But when you are acknowledging your sin and helplessness, in right covenant fellowship with Jesus as our Prophet and Priest, then we are welcome to ask God to save us from our fears, in addition to saving us from our sins.

Christian, God invites you to treat Jesus as the Israelites treated Samuel here. Don't cease to pray for us, that God might save us from all that scares us. Jesus can present all our fears to God. Jesus literally lives for this, to intercede with God on our behalf (Heb 7:25). His Spirit intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words (Rom 8:26). If God answered Samuel's prayers for Israel, then how much more will He answer His own Son's prayers for us? Samuel never shed a drop of his own blood for Israel, but Jesus poured out his very lifeblood for us. Jesus presented his own blood to God for our forgiveness. And will he not present our prayers and fears before God? Take heart, fearful soul; trust Jesus with your fears. We should have more confidence in Jesus's intercession than Israel had in Samuel's. Maybe it's your **past** coming back to haunt you. Maybe it's **current** threats, pressures, burdens, worries, risks that entangle your heart, that you can't see your way through. Maybe it's a dark prospect you see foreclosing on your **future**. Oh Christian, take it all to Jesus. He is with you. He will never leave you or forsake you. He has the words of eternal life, and he will take your words and worries to God and sanctify all your sighs and tears at the throne of grace. Jesus saved you. He is saving you. And he will save you still. "*In the world*

you will have tribulation. But take heart [Jesus said], I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). And it is His victory at the cross that paves the way for ours.

8. God’s victory in Christ at the cross paves the way for our victory over unbelief, sin, and death (7:10-11; so also Firth, Apollos 109). Our text says that God thundered against the Philistines, and then Israel struck them. That is the gospel order of Christian growth in fighting our own sins and spreading the gospel message. Jesus defeated sin, death, hell, and all the powers of unbelief at His cross and resurrection. Jesus is the one who thundered against our greatest enemies. He neutralized sin’s greatest weapon, death, by suffering it Himself and then rising again from the grave to a new and indestructible life. Jesus broke sin’s enslaving power over us. He even defanged death itself. So when we trust in Him, we walk in the train of His victory.

It doesn’t mean everything is roses. But it does mean that the power of your sexual temptation, or your worry, or your depression, or your temptation to gossip or get angry or yell at the kids or lose your temper in traffic, the power of coveting and envy and jealousy and strife, all those powers are confused and they lose their own force of compulsion when you bring the power of the cross to bear on it. Your sin was nailed to the cross, and its power was debilitated at Jesus’ resurrection. The power of your temptation to gossip, or covet, the power of the impulse to get angry and yell, that power is lying to you, as if Jesus were still in the grave. Not so. That composite army of lusts and lies, threats and fears, jealousies and paranoias, scatters before Christ’s death and resurrection. The risen Christ thunders against them all. He sends them running. Jesus has accomplished all that’s necessary for us to now fight the good fight and participate in His victory with a settled confidence of our own success with Him. Courage for self-denial and gospel proclamation is rooted in God’s victory through the resurrection of Jesus. And faith in that victory is what makes you a good soldier of Christ Jesus, armed with the truth. And so, as we fight the good fight, we pray.

9. Prayer is more powerful than politics (so also Brueggemann, Firth). Here Israel is, with no king and no legitimate standing army. They have no secretary of state or minister of foreign affairs to go out and negotiate with the Philistines. They have God and Samuel and prayer. The Philistines are the technocrats of the Iron Age. They’re the ones who figured out how to weaponize iron with the standing army, the sophisticated weapons systems, and the brutality to use them. The Philistines are the ones who are worldly wise, savvy and shrewd, not overly concerned about integrity or even being humane. Exclusive reliance on God wins. Of course, God can and does use politics and policies. But he loves using prayer, because prayer shows our complete dependence on Him. Prayer is the relational fruit of hearts inclined and directed to God. Prayer is the directing of the heart to God. And prayer reserves all praise for God. Friends, a church that wants to be fruitful and faithful, a church that wants to fight the good fight and win, must be a praying church.

10. God uses and approves ordinary faithful ministries (DR. Davis 80). Most of Samuel’s life was lived in obscurity, without it being recorded. All those years growing up under Eli and his sons. The years when Israel was learning to lament after the Lord. And then all these years between chapters 7 and 8 as Samuel goes on a three-city circuit year in and year out, and then back home to the hills of Ramah, until he becomes an old man. Yet it pleased God, and it prepared Samuel. Just because your service isn’t widely noticed or recorded, doesn’t make it meaningless to God.

CONCLUSION

I hope we've been encouraged this morning that God helps those who realize they are powerless to help themselves, those who turn from helping themselves to trust in Christ alone. That doesn't mean we become totally irresponsible, or blame God and others for our own sins. But I also hope it challenges us to see that sometimes it's good for us to lament after the Lord—to seek him with tears, to grieve not because we lost a gift, or a convenience, or a freedom, or a right; but rather to grieve because we have offended God Himself and become alienated from Him for a time.... Friend I wonder what idols do you need to put away today. Whatever you trust and love, that competes with Christ or displaces Him, that's an idol. Maybe it's your own competence, a job, a relationship, a sinful habit, a fear, a desire to blend in with the world, or a view of the true God that is actually not true to who God really is. Whatever it is, God loves to receive us when we repent. So go to Him. Lament after the Lord. Put away your idols. Direct your heart to God in Christ. Serve him only.

Commemorating God's past victories encourages our future faith (7:12; D.R. Davis).

God helps us based on Jesus' sacrifice for us (7:9). Jesus is the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. "Samuel took a nursing lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the Lord..."

God is so good that he often gives more than we ask (7:14). Cf. Eph 3 "exceedingly abundantly beyond all we can ask or imagine..."