

Kingmaker: The Qualities of a Godly Influencer
1 Samuel 5:1-6:21
Incorrect Assumptions About God

Introduction: Whenever you try to solve a problem with decisions based on incorrect assumptions you end up in a mess—every time.

When I was five years old, we were still living in my parents first house. I want everybody to know, in case some of their neighbors are reading this sermon, that this story is not about any of their current neighbors! Anyway, the neighbors in this story didn't exactly care about their house or yard. The gutters and some of the shutters were hanging off the house, and they generally didn't cut their grass until they could no longer see their Basset Hound walking around their back yard.

With that as the backdrop, one summer afternoon I was walking back from my friend's house and I saw a thermos laying in the gutter against the curb in front of their yard. Given where it was sitting, I assumed somebody must have tossed it out their car window while driving down the street. Based on that assumption, I assumed the thermos was fair game and I reached down and picked it up it.

As I picked up the thermos, I immediately noticed it was filled up with something heavy and I heard a "shink" sound. My curiosity raced, and I wondered what in the world was in a thermos made for coffee and soup that could make that kind of sound. The more I shook it to try and figure out what the "shink, shink," sound was, the more curious I got; so, I tried to open it. I turned the lid with all my might, but I couldn't get it to budge. Now, I was really curious! What was hidden in this thermos? What mystery lay within it?

I took the thermos into our garage to ponder a solution. I started digging through my dad's toolbox to try and find a set of plyers big enough to fit around the lid, but as I did, I thought, why waste time trying to unscrew a lid, when I can get my dad's saw and cut it open!

Right before my neighbor pulled into his driveway, I had just cut deep enough into the thermos to see the broken glass that filled it. Why in the world would a thermos be filled with broken glass? As I scratched my 5-year-old head to try and stimulate my brain, my neighbor realized what I was doing, jumped out his car and ran straight to me yelling all kinds of obscenities for ruining his thermos! He was so red faced and irate that I had no idea what was about to happen, but I figured whatever it was, it was going to be really bad. I had never seen an adult come at me with that kind of anger. I had never heard an adult threaten me like that.

As he screamed and yelled and demanded to know why I had sawed open his thermos, I responded with, "my dad told me to do it!" He yelled back, "where is he?" I said, "he's down the street lifting weights with a friend."

The neighbor knew exactly where that was, so he jerked the half sawed open thermos out of my hand and stormed off down the street with it. I sat there in total fear. Not only had this grown man just scared me to death, but I knew my dad was getting ready to find out I had just lied about him!

Now understand, my dad is a genuinely humble, loving, kind, generous and very patient man. However, he was also a sprinter in college, and he's held two world powerlifting records for his age group and weight class in the Raw Power Lifting Federation. He's quick, powerful, athletic and mentally, emotionally and physically tough as nails; in other words, one of those people you would just really rather not pick a fight with—let's just leave it at that.

So, with that said, to this day I don't know what happened down the street, but when my neighbor came back he hurried into his house without even looking at me. My dad soon followed and told me to go to my room. I figured, here it comes! I'm about to get spanked for sawing open this guy's thermos and more importantly lying about why! However, my dad, being the objective guy that he is, came into the room with my mom and asked me what happened. After telling him, he talked to me about why a person should never lie, even when they're scared, and then said I wasn't going to get a spanking because an adult should never come at a child the way that man did to me.

I've always wondered what happened when our neighbor stormed into somebody else's garage yelling a false accusation at my dad and boasting that he had just threatened his son. I truly have no idea what happened, but I will say that man never so much as looked in my direction from that day forward!

Now, my point in that story is that the entire fiasco got started because I made an incorrect assumption about a thermos. I assumed it was intentionally discarded by somebody. In seeing it filled with broken glass, that assumption only grew; I mean who in the world would fill a thermos with broken glass and intentionally leave it in the gutter of a street if they intended on using it again? The answer turns out to be the kind of people who don't care if their house is falling apart, and their dog is lost in their own tiny back yard! As completely unbelievable as it was that he intended to keep that thermos, it didn't change the fact that I had made an incorrect assumption and caused a big ginormous mess in the process!

Incorrect assumptions always lead to big messes, especially when those assumptions are about God. In first Samuel chapters five and six we see two examples of this truth.

Proposition: In 1 Samuel 5 and 6 we see two incorrect assumptions about God and His ways.

The first incorrect assumption is made by the Philistines.

(1) The Philistines incorrectly assumed they defeated God. – 5:1-6:12

A. 1 When the Philistines captured the ark of God, they brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. 2 Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it into the house of Dagon and set it up beside Dagon.

1. “The primary god of their pantheon was Dagon, a deity worshiped also in upper Mesopotamia as a grain god. Some scholars suggest that the Philistine Dagon was represented as having a human torso and upper body and a fish’s tail. It may well be that the originally seafaring Philistines brought their fish god with them to Canaan and then adapted him to the Semitic god Dagon (or Dagan, as it is known outside the Bible), because of their need to become a grain-producing people (Jud. 15:3–5).”¹
2. When the Philistines set The Ark beside their god Dagon, they were saying Yahweh now serves Dagon. In the previous chapter, after killing 4,000 Jews in battle, the Jews then went and got The Ark, believing God would give them favor in battle if they had it. However, the exact opposite thing happened. With The Ark, 30,000 Jewish men died in battle and the Philistines took it. For the Philistines, they believed this proved Dagon was greater than Yahweh, and thus they set The Ark in a subservient spot to Dagon and went to bed that night celebrating.
3. And understand this, although their knowledge was completely warped about who Yahweh is, the Philistines still knew the gist about all that Yahweh had done for the Hebrew people. They believed Yahweh to be a significantly formidable opponent that required courage to fight. In 1 Samuel 4:8 they credited Yahweh for striking the Egyptians with plagues, so for Dagon to defeat Yahweh was a big deal. Little did they know, not only did Dagon not even exist, but Yahweh was the reason the Philistines defeated the Hebrew people in the first place. The Philistines hadn’t defeated Yahweh, Yahweh had disciplined the Hebrews by the using the Philistines.

B. 3 And when the people of Ashdod rose early the next day, behold, Dagon had fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of the LORD. So they took Dagon and put him back in his place. 4 But when they rose early on the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of the LORD, and the head of Dagon and both his hands were lying cut off on the threshold. Only the trunk of Dagon was left to him. 5 This is why the priests of Dagon and all who enter the house of Dagon do not tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day.

1. I can’t get the old commercial out of my head for the medical alert system where the person cries out, “help, I’ve fallen and I can’t get up.” Here’s poor

¹ Merrill, E. H. (1985). [1 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 436). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

old Dagon laying in the floor the first morning, but then even worse, the second morning he's lying there with both his hands cut off and even worse, his head! Furthermore, Dagon wasn't laying on the ground on his side, but face down, which is a posture of worship. Dagon appears to be worshipping Yahweh!

2. Seeing this the first morning may have alarmed some of the priests, but they could have easily written it off as the results of a mild earthquake or something else. However, when they got up the second morning and found Dagon in the same prostrate position before The Ark, except this time with his head and hands cut off, they went into panic mode! The comedy in all this is that Dagon could not only not get himself up, but now he couldn't even keep himself together!
3. Verse five adds a measure of comedy to the scenario as well. Some believe the word translated as "threshold" refers to the entirety of the area Dagon was located, and thus the Philistines would never again go into that room. However, most interpret it as the threshold of a doorway. A threshold is essential the bottom of a doorway that joins two floors together. Apparently, the head and hands of Dagon had rolled across the floor and come to a stop at the threshold of his temple. The Philistines were so horrified at finding the head and hands of Dagon laying in the threshold that they superstitiously made sure to not step on the threshold from that day forward. They treated the threshold of Dagon's temple like the line game we used to play as kids, that if you stepped on a line you lost, but others actually believed they would be cursed!
4. "The main point here is that Yahweh defeated Dagon in his own temple. The memory of that humiliation was perpetuated in this religious superstition for generations (5:1-5)."²
5. However, it wasn't just Dagon who was suffering the judgment of God. The comedy turns to tragedy. The writer of Samuel records,
 - C. **6 The hand of the LORD was heavy against the people of Ashdod, and he terrified and afflicted them with tumors, both Ashdod and its territory.**
 - 7 And when the men of Ashdod saw how things were, they said, "The ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us, for his hand is hard against us and against Dagon our god."**
 - 8 So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines and said, "What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?" They answered, "Let the ark of the God of Israel be brought around to Gath." So they brought the ark of the God of Israel there.**

² Smith, J. E. (1995). [*The Books of History*](#) (pp. 255-256). Joplin, MO: College Press.

1. "Many translations read "tumors" or "hemorrhoids" here based on a suggestion in the margin of the traditional Hebrew Bible—which literally refers to mounds or bulges. But the main Hebrew text refers to "swellings."³
2. "...The logic behind this proposal is less than transparent. I would love to know what the lord of Gath had to say about it! Still, he was outnumbered four to one. Why Gath? We can only guess. It was the Philistine city furthest to the east from Ashdod and closest to the Israelite hills. But perhaps the king of Gath was the weakest member of the meeting. Their decision does reveal one thing clearly. At this stage they had no intention of relinquishing control of the ark."⁴

D. 9 But after they had brought it around, the hand of the LORD was against the city, causing a very great panic, and he afflicted the men of the city, both young and old, so that tumors broke out on them. 10 So they sent the ark of God to Ekron. But as soon as the ark of God came to Ekron, the people of Ekron cried out, "They have brought around to us the ark of the God of Israel to kill us and our people." 11 They sent therefore and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines and said, "Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it return to its own place, that it may not kill us and our people." For there was a deathly panic throughout the whole city. The hand of God was very heavy there. 12 The men who did not die were struck with tumors, and the cry of the city went up to heaven.

Note: The celebration of defeating the Hebrew God was over! They are done with the Ark! The people are in complete panic fearing their entire nation is going to be destroyed by the God of this box they took from the Jews. They can see no other solution but to send it back in hopes that Yahweh will no longer inflict His wrath on them. So, they finally come up with a plan. Samuel writes,

E. 1 The ark of the LORD was in the country of the Philistines seven months. 2 And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners and said, "What shall we do with the ark of the LORD? Tell us with what we shall send it to its place." 3 They said, "If you send away the ark of the God of Israel, do not send it empty, but by all means return him a guilt offering. Then you will be healed, and it will be known to you why his hand does not turn away from you." 4 And they said, "What is the guilt offering that we shall return to him?" They answered, "Five golden tumors and five golden mice, according to the number of the lords of the Philistines, for the same plague was on all of you and on your lords. 5 So you must make images of your tumors and images of your mice that ravage the land, and give glory to the God of Israel. Perhaps he will lighten his hand from off you and your gods and

³ Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (1 Sa 5:1-6). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

⁴ Woodhouse, J. (2008). [1 Samuel: Looking for a leader](#) (pp. 107-110). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

your land. 6 Why should you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? After he had dealt severely with them, did they not send the people away, and they departed?

1. Interestingly, the Philistines are taking their cue from Pharaoh, who finally, after losing his first born along with everybody else's firstborn in Egypt, decided to set the Israelites free! However, although its once again a warped understanding, unlike Pharaoh, they understand they have sinned against Yahweh and therefore need to offer some sort of atonement; that is, something to pay for their sins. Granted, what they offer could never accomplish that task any more than the offering of a bull or a goat in the temple; only Jesus can atone for our sins!
2. But they at least got the part right that they had sinned against Yahweh, and in sending back his box they needed to also offer up some sort of payment for their sin. Their decision on what to offer gives us some potential insight into what's going on.
 - a. "Because of the connection of the tumors with rodents (cf. 6:4-5, 17-18), many scholars think that some form of bubonic plague spread throughout the land (5:6-7)."⁵
 - b. "The *tumours* were a symptom of a *plague* which was probably caused by the *rats*. Nobody in the ancient world knew that rats were instrumental in causing plagues, and it looks as if the rats were attacking food stores. V 6 reminds us that God had previously used plagues to force an earlier enemy of Israel, Egypt, to release his people Israel (see Ex. 7-12)."⁶
 - c. "Plague is an infectious disease caused by a specific type of bacterium called *Yersinia pestis*. *Y. pestis* can affect humans and animals and is spread mainly by fleas. Bubonic plague is one type of plague. It gets its name from the [swollen lymph nodes](#) (buboes) caused by the disease. The nodes in the armpit, groin and neck can become as large as eggs and can ooze pus. The other types of plague are: Septicemic plague, which happens when the infection goes all through the body. Pneumonic plague, which happens when lungs are infected."⁷
3. The spiritual leaders of the Philistines then tell them what to do with the Ark.

⁵ Smith, J. E. (1995). *The Books of History* (p. 256). Joplin, MO: College Press.

⁶ Payne, D. F. (1994). [1 and 2 Samuel](#). In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., p. 302). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

⁷ <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/21590-bubonic-plague>

- F. 7 Now then, take and prepare a new cart and two milk cows on which there has never come a yoke, and yoke the cows to the cart, but take their calves home, away from them. 8 And take the ark of the LORD and place it on the cart and put in a box at its side the figures of gold, which you are returning to him as a guilt offering. Then send it off and let it go its way 9 and watch. If it goes up on the way to its own land, to Beth-shemesh, then it is he who has done us this great harm, but if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that struck us; it happened to us by coincidence."**

Note: In other words, if this is indeed Yahweh doing this to us, then He will accept our guilt offering and direct the Ark back to the Hebrew people. However, if it's not Yahweh then the Ark will not leave, and we will need to go back to the drawing board on what's causing all this.

- G. 10 The men did so, and took two milk cows and yoked them to the cart and shut up their calves at home. 11 And they put the ark of the LORD on the cart and the box with the golden mice and the images of their tumors. 12 And the cows went straight in the direction of Beth-shemesh along one highway, lowing as they went. They turned neither to the right nor to the left, and the lords of the Philistines went after them as far as the border of Beth-shemesh.**

1. "Rather than turn back to their calves, the cows went straight down the road lowing as they went under divine compulsion away from their calves. They turned neither to the right nor to the left. The lords of the Philistines followed the cart to the borders of Beth-shemesh, some ten miles east of Ekron. This guaranteed that no one would tamper in any way with the experiment. The unnatural behavior of the cows convinced them that the disaster which had befallen their land was not mere chance."⁸
2. When it says they were "lowing as they went," some scholars feel this would have been interpreted as the cows feeling forced to go a direction they didn't want to go. These cows had never been yoked before, so they wouldn't know what to do, and they also would not have wanted to leave their calves that they would have been feeding. To the Philistines, this put enough obstacles in the way that if the cows led the Ark down the road to the Hebrews, it must have been Yahweh who did it. Furthermore, given the Philistine leaders were only following to see what happened, not driving the cows to their destination, some scholars believe the "lowing" would have further insinuated that God Himself was driving them.

⁸ Smith, J. E. (1995). *The Books of History* (p. 257). Joplin, MO: College Press.

- H. Seeing the cows taking the Ark back to the Israelites made it real clear to the Philistines that they had made a terribly incorrect assumption. They incorrectly assumed God can be defeated and that they had done so.

This sets a surprising second incorrect assumption about God and His ways because it's made by the very people you would expect not to do it!

(1) The Levites in Beth-shemesh incorrectly assumed circumstances could justify violating God's Law. – 6:13-21

A. **13 Now the people of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley. And when they lifted up their eyes and saw the ark, they rejoiced to see it. 14 The cart came into the field of Joshua of Beth-shemesh and stopped there. A great stone was there. And they split up the wood of the cart and offered the cows as a burnt offering to the LORD. 15 And the Levites took down the ark of the LORD and the box that was beside it, in which were the golden figures, and set them upon the great stone. And the men of Beth-shemesh offered burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices on that day to the LORD. 16 And when the five lords of the Philistines saw it, they returned that day to Ekron. 17 These are the golden tumors that the Philistines returned as a guilt offering to the LORD: one for Ashdod, one for Gaza, one for Ashkelon, one for Gath, one for Ekron, 18 and the golden mice, according to the number of all the cities of the Philistines belonging to the five lords, both fortified cities and unwalled villages. The great stone beside which they set down the ark of the LORD is a witness to this day in the field of Joshua of Beth-shemesh.**

1. "The Israelites were so overjoyed to see **the ark** after seven months (6:1) that they offered a sacrifice of **the cows to the Lord** at **Beth Shemesh**, the border town where the ark had been directed, about 15 miles west of Jerusalem."⁹
2. Scholars agree that Joshua of Beth-shemesh is not the Joshua who led the Hebrew people after Israel. Furthermore, scholars seem to agree that not only was the stone obviously still available to see at the time of the writing of 1st Samuel, but also the golden tumors and golden mice. There is no hint to where they may have been stored or put on display, but they are spoke of in the present tense, and thus seemingly being talked about as something people had access to or at least knowledge of.
3. Interestingly, the city the cows walk to is a city for Levites. The Levites were the tribe of Israel God called out to serve the spiritual needs of Israel. They were not given tribal lands to pass down from generation to generation, but

⁹ Merrill, E. H. (1985). [1 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 437). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

instead, they were given cities in each tribal land to live among those they serve, as well as fields to grow crops and raise livestock to provide for their needs. The point being, the cows walked straight to a city full of experts on how to handle the Ark. It's their job to know the Law of Moses and serve the people accordingly.

4. So, where's the incorrect assumption? Well, watch what happens next. The author of 1 Samuel notes,

B. 19 And he struck some of the men of Beth-shemesh, because they looked upon the ark of the LORD. He struck seventy men of them, and the people mourned because the LORD had struck the people with a great blow.

1. Tons of people saw The Ark and didn't die, so it doesn't make sense that simply seeing it caused their death (i.e. Joshua 3:2-3). Therefore, many scholars believe the text implies that some men actually opened the Ark of the Covenant and looked inside of it, perhaps to make sure the Philistines had not stolen the golden pot that held the manna, the copy of the ten commandments and Aaron's rod that budded. However, as well intentioned as that act may have been, it was still forbidden and heavily consequential.
2. John Woodhouse wrote, **"To defy God is as stupid as it sounds, and far more stupid than it often looks. Don't do it."**¹⁰
3. It doesn't matter if defiance seems to have good intentions or motives; if its defiance, it's already by definition wrong, no matter what your reasoning is. God is the perfectly sovereign God who doesn't need us to accomplish His purposes, so He has no issue with being uncompromisingly committed to requiring our obedience no matter what!
4. In this particular matter, God had made it real clear in the Law of Moses how the Ark, the symbol of the Covenant He had made with them was to be handled, and as such, how they were to handle the Covenant God made with them as a nation as well. The Covenant God made with them was holy, in that He hadn't made it with any other nation, and that its purpose was more important than any other covenant on the planet—JESUS! This covenant made it clear that they were first and foremost God's people, chosen by Him for His purpose, and that they had to obey Him in every matter! This is why the consequence of violating the laws related to the Ark illustrated the consequences of violating the laws that governed those living in the Covenant that God made with Israel. The Ark was a testimony to that covenant.

¹⁰ Woodhouse, J. (2008). [*1 Samuel: Looking for a leader*](#) (pp. 107–110). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

5. Because some interpretations of the Hebrew have the number at over 50,000 men dying, some wonder how that could happen. How could that many people have looked inside the Ark anyway? First off, I think the number is more accurately understood as seventy, but, if it is 50,070 men as some interpret it to be, then, it's likely because of the continued rampant idolatry among the Hebrew people that we will learn about later in 1st Samuel. Remember, 34,000 men didn't die in the two battles against the Philistines seven months earlier because they didn't have or handle the Ark right, but rather because they were living in total rebellion against God!
6. The following are various views of the debate over how many actually died.
 - a. "Due to a dispute over the Hebrew text and its translation, the number appears as seventy in some versions and 50,070 in others. Either way, the point is that it is deadly to trifle with the holy things of God. Later, Uzzah will be struck down under similar circumstances (2 Sam. 6:6–7)."¹¹
 - b. "The number of people affected by the plague at Beth-shemesh is in dispute. Actually the Hebrew text contains two numbers side by side, seventy and fifty thousand. NIV chooses the smaller figure, apparently regarding the fifty thousand as a gloss. NASB follows the Septuagint in combining these numbers into one figure, 50,070."¹²
 - c. "Most English translations put the number killed at 70, following the cue of a small number of Hebrew manuscripts. This emendation goes against both the traditional Hebrew text and the Septuagint (the ancient Greek translation of the OT), which awkwardly indicate a much higher number (literally "70 men, 50,000 men"). The population of the small town of Beth-shemesh would have been considerably under 50,000."¹³
7. The point is however that the return of The Ark demonstrated that "Ichabod" was not, nor had not been, the reality of Israel. God would never abandon Israel. He is always faithful to His Word and He is eternally gracious. On the other hand, it also demonstrated that just because the Ark was coming back, didn't mean they could do with it as they pleased!
8. So, instead of looking into the Law they were supposed to know to find out why people were dying; instead of doing what would have led them to see they weren't supposed to look inside the Ark; they instead incorrectly concluded nobody could ever be worthy of possessing it! They

¹¹ Newheiser, J. (2011). *Opening Up 1 Samuel* (pp. 40–41). Leominster: Day One.

¹² Smith, J. E. (1995). *The Books of History* (p. 258). Joplin, MO: College Press.

¹³ Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). *Faithlife Study Bible* (1 Sa 6:13–21). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

unfortunately acted like the Philistines and concluded what they needed to do is send the Ark somewhere else, ironically to another Hebrew city! So much for being concerned for your bothers! The writer notes,

C. 20 Then the men of Beth-shemesh said, "Who is able to stand before the LORD, this holy God? And to whom shall he go up away from us?" 21 So they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kiriath-jearim, saying, "The Philistines have returned the ark of the LORD. Come down and take it up to you."

1. **"Kiriath Jearim** (modern Abu Ghosh, about 10 miles northwest of Jerusalem). No doubt **the ark** was taken there rather than to Shiloh, because the latter was destroyed by the Philistines, perhaps after the battle of Aphek (chap. 4; cf. Jer. 26:9). The ark remained in the custody of the family of Abinadab (1 Sam. 7:1) for about 100 years."¹⁴
2. Notice they left out the stuff about people dying! These people in Beth-shemesh are not who you want as friends!
3. There's also something interesting in who they reach out to, to take the Ark. In Judges 18:12 we learn that Kiriath-jearim had an area so closely associated with it called Mahaneh-dan, that it was often referred to as one and the same place. In Judges 13:25 we see that Mahaneh-dan is where Sampson grew up.

Note: 25 And the Spirit of the LORD began to stir him in Mahaneh-dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol. (Judges 13:25)

4. Point being, it appears the people they called on to take the Ark are the people who lived in what would essentially be Samson's childhood hometown. The years in which all this took place are somewhat debated, but in all likelihood, there are still generations alive that had first-hand knowledge of Samson's rule as a Judge of Israel and thus a certain respect of the people in that area. The reason this is significant is not because this Levite city, full of people who are supposed to know how to care for the Ark, and are literally charged by God to do it, fail to do their job; but rather, in their failure, they look to pass off their responsibility to people who are not Levites, have no formalized training on how to care for it, and will die if they mess up!
5. They have incorrectly assumed they didn't have to obey the laws concerning The Ark if their motives were well intended, and then after the consequences struck them, made another incorrect assumption than nobody

¹⁴ Merrill, E. H. (1985). [1 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 437–438). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

could care for the Ark, but nonetheless, seek out people who have no idea what to do, nor are commissioned to do it, to bail them out! What a mess!

Challenge: It is a devastating mistake to misinterpret the grace of God. Two of the most common incorrect assumptions about God and His grace are:

(1) His grace isn't enough.

- A. So many make the incorrect assumption that God can't forgive them, and that Christ's death can't pay the penalty of their sin. So many assume they can never truly be a favored child of God, either because of their past, or because of their present; that is, sin they continue to battle but nonetheless still find themselves falling into. They let their failure define the truth about God's grace rather than the God who made it clear that His grace is enough! Christ truly paid it all!
- B. **4 But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:4-7)**
- C. **11 But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) 12 he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. (Hebrews 9:11-12)**

The second incorrect assumption people make about God's grace is the opposite. A growing number of people in the western church are incorrectly assuming,

(2) His grace means I can freely sin.

- A. **1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? (Romans 6:1-2)**
- B. **28 Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. 29 How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Hebrews 10:28-31)**
- C. If it can be done, the writer of Hebrews preached the perfectly atoning grace of Christ more dogmatically than any other book of the Bible. There is no

implication in Hebrews that God's grace is insufficient. What he's saying here is that those who continue to embrace their sin by viewing God's grace as a license to continue in it are in no way a child of God. These people should expect not the blessings of His eternal life, but the terrible judgement of His eternal wrath. If God responded to the sins of those who violated the Mosaic Law with the kind of wrath we see for simply violating laws concerning the viewing of the inside of the Ark, how much more will He respond in wrath to those who use the death of Christ as a reason to happily live in and justify that which cost Jesus His life!

So, are you living your life based on incorrect assumptions about God and His grace? Are you living in bondage because you assume He can't still love you? Are you living in arrogance because you are assuming His death frees you to justify your sin? Incorrect assumptions always result in huge messes, and there can be no bigger mess than a life that made incorrect assumptions about God and His grace!