



Key Notes

What do you do when a crisis hits? To whom do you turn? Many of us do what the Israelites did some 3,000 years ago: we call on our God-in-the-Box.

The Philistines had defeated Israel in battle and killed 4,000 of their soldiers. Not good. Shouldn't God's people be the winners and those pagan Philistines the losers? This is not the way things are supposed to work! What's going on here? Israel responded to her crisis by calling on God-in-the-Box.

When the soldiers returned to camp, the elders of Israel asked, "Why did the Lord bring defeat upon us today before the Philistines? Let us bring the ark of the Lord's covenant from Shiloh, so that it may go with us and save us from the hand of our enemies" (1 Samuel 4:3).

That explains it! We lost the battle because we didn't have our God-in-the-Box with us! Next time we'll be ready. Then we're sure to win! Right? When the Philistines attacked again, the Israelites took the ark of the covenant with them into battle. Alas. The slaughter was greater than before. And to add insult to injury, God-in-the-Box was captured. (1 Samuel 4:10-11)

Friend, if you are calling on your God yet continue to experience one defeat after another, perhaps you have the same problem as Israel. You have somehow exchanged the true God for God-in-the-Box. Let these questions reveal the true nature of your worship this morning:

- Do I carry God into battle like a good luck charm? Or does He carry me?
- Do I perform rituals in the expectation that if I get the words and actions right, God will come out of His box and grant my wish?
- Do I assume that the purpose for God's existence is to help me get what I want?
- Are my prayers focused on getting my will... or doing His?
- Do I despair when God doesn't perform as I think He should?
- Is my theology an attempt to explain God? Or a basis for worshipping Him?

I fear that many of us, like ancient Israel, misunderstand the God we worship. We put Him in a "box" so that we can control Him, use Him, explain Him. When He fails to perform on command and live up to our expectations, we throw up our hands in despair.

God is bigger than your box. Let Him out! Give Him permission to define Himself. Stop trying to domesticate the Lion of Judah! Only when He is beyond our ability to explain and control is He worthy of worship!

Pastor Stan
Romans 11:33-36