

SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 2



SAMUEL'S FIRST CALL

Scripture Text: 1 Samuel 3:1-21

As a background for Samuel's call, we must think of the religious conditions of Israel in history, particularly the decadent state of the priesthood. There was no widespread vision. As our Lord could not do many mighty works because of people's unbelief, so the sin of the people restrained the prophets in their speaking the Words of God in the days of Samuel.

The worst kind of sinful corruption was found in Shiloh, which was the site of the tabernacle with the Ark of the Covenant, and here dwelt the Lord of Hosts. Eli's sons robbed God and the people of the sacrifices offered. Added to this was the shameful sexual immoralities carried on in the temple by Eli's sons. Lower and lower sank the priests in their wicked practices, while Samuel was growing spiritually, filled with true devotion to his calling and obedience to his Lord and to Eli.

MEMORY VERSE: *My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways. —Proverbs 23:26*

Samuel's Call

1 Samuel 3:1-10 Samuel served the Lord in the temple or tabernacle at Shiloh having been given to the Lord for this purpose by his parents. He was yet a child and not used to the ways of the Lord and unfamiliar with His voice (**1 Samuel 3:7**). **Word ... precious.** Rarity adds value to things. Spiritual life then was at a low ebb. **There was no open vision.** There was no visible prophet, one in whom the Lord was known to dwell.

The story of Samuel is a clear, detailed, step-by-step development of a little child from the time of his birth until he assumes his position of responsibility in the world. God could no longer count Eli faithful to perform the duties of the priesthood. **And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the Lord...the Lord called Samuel.** There are so many lessons that we can learn from Samuel's call that we can but briefly touch on a few of them here. 1. Young people can fill an important place in spreading the light of the Gospel. 2. God called Samuel in the course of an ordinary day's routine of work. Having cared for Eli, and having lit the lamp that burned all night before the Lord, and having closed the doors of the sanctuary, Samuel went to sleep in his room. During the night Samuel heard the voice of God. No great sound from Heaven, but in the accents of the man he lived with in the tabernacle. For the most part, God speaks to us through earthly influences, in the lives of those about us and in familiar scenes – often through a saint or a godly pastor. 3. God does not always call us to the easy things. It is not always easy to be a Christian. The first thing that Samuel had to do after his call was to go and tell Eli, his best friend, that God's judgment was coming upon his house because of his son's sins. By relaying this message to Eli, Samuel was jeopardizing his position at the temple. Yet duty called, and he obeyed. In these perilous times, how many are seeking His will and relying on His guidance? 4. The Lord does not call one to do great things until he has proven faithful in the lesser responsibilities.

Punishment for Eli's House

1 Samuel 3:11-14 Eli had been told before of God's displeasure at the sins of his sons and the judgment God had passed upon him and his posterity because of it (**1 Samuel 2:27-36**). God had sent a **man of God** to warn Eli. There had been no change. Now the time was past when Eli had power to control his sons.

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Now God sends another message through Samuel. It was a severe one. All Israel would know – **both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle**. God would **make an end** – do all He had said – the strength and honor of Eli’s family would be removed; his descendants would either be shut out from the priesthood or be a source of grief in it; all would die young, poverty would follow the family. The judgment was permanent, and no sacrifice or offering could change it. This judgment had two causes – **1. His sons made themselves vile, and 2. He restrained them not**. Take notice where God places the greatest responsibility. Why did the Lord speak to Eli rather than his sons? Sin does not spring up full-grown. Eli had been entrusted the care, teaching, and training of these boys from infancy. He had the privilege and opportunity to mold the lives while still innocent. Had he obeyed? He **restrained them not**. Who now must suffer for his neglect?

Eli’s Response

1 Samuel 3:15-18 What a heavy message for a child to carry! He did not carry it alone; the needed strength was given to him. He **lay until morning**. He **feared to shew Eli**. Samuel’s childish timidity made him fear, at first, to tell Eli. But when he did, he told **every whit**, holding nothing back. Who did Samuel fear most and seek most to please? How much is fear of man responsible for compromise? What was Eli’s response to the bitter message – rebellion, a charge of injustice? No. **It is the Lord: let Him do...** Acceptance to God’s will. He knew it was just.

Samuel Established as a Prophet

1 Samuel 3:19-21 **And Samuel grew** – added size, knowledge, maturity, and understanding. **The Lord was with him**, turning his attainments to good ends. Of what use are any attainments without the Lord? All Israel could see the results and knew Samuel **to be a prophet of the Lord**. Israel knew Samuel was established as a prophet. How? Had they elected him? Had Eli or another appointed him? Had Israel been told to respect him as a prophet?

What establishes one now in a place in God’s church? Is it election or appointment or something more vital? It is the manifestation of the gift of the Spirit. Does authority rest in the office or in the gift? What level of respect are you showing the man who God has established as your prophet?

If we do our duty faithfully and learn to be obedient to those who are above us, God will bless us and send us into fields of greater service. God prepares His leaders through years of silent discipline until He is ready to use them.

JUST A THOUGHT

One of the most important words in the Christian vocabulary is “growth”.

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
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