

1 Samuel 3 - Thursday, July 18th, 2013

(1) Now the boy Samuel ministered to the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was rare in those days; *there was* no widespread revelation.

- We start the chapter with another stark contrast such that Samuel is ministering to the Lord, when it was rare to hear the word of the Lord.
- Let's first look at what it means to minister to the Lord, then take just a little bit of time to talk about why God's Word was rare in those days.
- It's interesting to note that this is now the third time we're told Samuel ministered to the Lord the first two were back in chapter 2:11 and 18.

- Additionally, in Exodus 29:1, we have Aaron and his sons ministering to the Lord, and in Acts 13:1-2 we have Paul and Barnabas as well.
- So, to the question of what does it mean to minister to the Lord, I would suggest that there was a common denominator in all these cases.
- Namely, they ministered to the Lord, by praying, fasting, worshipping, and serving, which is why and when it is, God would speak to them.

Acts 13:2 NKJV As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

- The reason I point this out is, just as God spoke to Paul and Barnabas after ministering to the Lord, so too does God also speak to Samuel.
- I suppose the take away from this is that God is more likely to reveal Himself to us in His speaking to us when we are ministering to Him.
- In other words, in those times of seeking after the Lord, and ministering to the Lord, I'll likely hear Him speak through the Word of the Lord.

- Actually, I'm of the belief that it's for this reason we have this stark contrast between Samuel and God's word being rare here in verse one.
- Let me explain, it could very well be God put the desire on Hannah's heart to dedicate her son to the Lord for such a time as this in Israel.
- By that I mean, Israel desperately needed a Samuel, and as such, God, in his searching for a heart fully devoted to Him, found Hannah.

- While this may answer why God raised up a Samuel when the Word of God was so rare, let's answer the question of why it was so rare.
- I would suggest that the answer to this is two fold; first, it was because God's people were doing that which seemed right in their own eyes.
- Secondly, the Word of God was so rare because the priesthood was so corrupt, which may also be why they did whatever they wanted.

(2) And it came to pass at that time, while Eli *was* lying down in his place, and when his eyes had begun to grow so dim that he could not see, (3) and before the lamp of God went out in the tabernacle of the LORD where the ark of God *was*, and while Samuel was lying down, (4) that the LORD called Samuel. And he answered, "Here I am!"

- I find this most interesting for a number of reasons not the least of which is, it provides us a template of sorts to know how God speaks.
- While we can't know for a certainty that God spoke audibly, we can still know for a certainty the ways that God does speak to us today.
- Perhaps you'll indulge me for just a moment as I share with you four ways I've personally known that had God had indeed spoken to me.

- First and foremost, I can know God is speaking to me when it's according to and in line with His Word. Absent this, I know it's not the Lord.
- Secondly I can know God is speaking to me when He gives me a peace about it in my heart and God's peace comes vis-à-vis God's Word.
- Thirdly, in concert with God's Word and God's peace, it's God's providence, such that He will orchestrate the circumstances providentially.

- The fourth way I can know God is speaking to me is when He will confirm it by way of the multitude of Godly counsel from other believers.
- However, it's absolutely crucial all four of these are in concert together in the sense that there will be this harmony and or unison together.
- One final thought, I think the lesson here is not just how God speaks, but perhaps more importantly, do I hear and heed when God speaks.

- If the truth be made known, God is always speaking in and through His word, but the question is, do we always hear and heed His Word.
- What I find interesting is, Samuel is still a relatively young boy at this time, yet he is so in tune with the Lord, he hears the word of the Lord.
- Would to God that we would be found numbered amongst those of whom it could be said, here am I my Lord, do with me what thou wilt.

Charles Spurgeon - "Samuel is said by Josephus to have been about twelve years of age at this time, ...how charming a sight is a young child serving the Lord. ...God calls his servants when he pleases, and it is well for them to be able to reply, 'Here am I.' Whether it be for duty or suffering, the true child of God says, 'Here am I.'"

(5) So he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." And he said, "I did not call; lie down again." And he went and lay down. (6) Then the LORD called yet again, "Samuel!" So Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." He answered, "I did not call, my son; lie down again." (7) (Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, nor was the word of the LORD yet revealed to him.) (8) And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. So he arose and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you did call me." Then Eli perceived that the LORD had called the boy. (9) Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and it shall be, if He calls you, that you must say, 'Speak, LORD, for Your servant hears.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

- This is one of my favorite accounts in all the Bible because it speaks to something of paramount importance when it comes to God's Word.
- Here's why, only the Word of God can speak to me in such a way that I know it's true because only God could have known that about me.
- Furthermore, I will only respond to the Word of God by saying and even praying, "speak Lord, Your servant hears, because I know it's Him.

(10) Now the LORD came and stood and called as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel answered, "Speak, for Your servant hears." (11) Then the LORD said to Samuel: "Behold, I will do something in Israel at which both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle.

- When the Lord speaks to Samuel, he does what Eli told him to do, and in effect says to the Lord, "speak, whatever you say to do, I will do."
- Then, when the Lord responds to Samuel, He basically tells him that He is going to mete out judgment so loudly everyone's ears will ring.
- I can't help but think that Samuel couldn't have gotten much sleep before hearing this, and he couldn't have gotten any sleep after this.

Charles Spurgeon - "When God speaks to us, a hearing ear is a great mercy; but a heavy ear is a sad judgment."

One commentator of this judgment wrote; "Not only will those that feel it, groan under it, but those that only hear the report of it shall be struck with such amazement and horror, which will make their heads and hearts ache."

(12) In that day I will perform against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. (13) For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knows, because his sons made themselves vile, and he did not restrain them. (14) And therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever."

- Here, the Lord is telling Samuel that His judgment will be complete from front to finish and that it was too late in that they'd sealed their fate.
- Lest we think God's judgment against the house of Eli is too severe, we'd do well to notice something that's not so visible in a cursory read.
- Notice God tells Samuel that Eli not only knows about this coming judgment he also knows why God is just in His bringing this judgment.

- Here's how I get there, Eli knew full well that he was guilty of the sin of omission by virtue of never confronting and restraining his two sons.
- Moreover, Eli also knew full well his window of opportunity to repent had closed when he didn't heed the warning from God's messenger.
- One reason I've drawn this conclusion is that, conspicuously absent from the narrative is any mention of any response whatsoever from Eli.

- Another reason I am drawing this conclusion is because God turns his attention to a young Samuel knowing that he will hear and head it.
- Here in lies the lesson from the text, God will often times speak only to those of whom He knows have ears to hear and hearts to receive.
- I'll take it a step further and suggest, God not only speaks to those with ears to hear and hearts to receive He also speaks through them.

Charles Spurgeon - "When God had sent a man of God to Eli, and the message did not arouse him to a sense of his sin in over-indulgence of his sons, and toleration of evil in those under him, the Lord sends him a word of threatening by a child; for God has many messengers."

- Before we move on to verse fifteen, there's something else here that I think I'd be grossly remiss were I not to take moment to point it out.
- Eli's sin of omission seems to have had two components, the first of which was he didn't confront and restrain them when they were young.
- The second one may have even been more serious such that he didn't confront and restrain them as adult men serving in the priesthood.

One commentator insightfully writes, "Eli's responsibility to restrain his sons was not only, or even mainly, because he was their father. These were adult sons, no longer under Eli's authority as sons as they were when they were younger. Eli's main responsibility to restrain his sons was as their "boss," because he was the high priest, and his sons were priests under his authority and supervision. ... Eli's indulgence towards his sons as a boss was no doubt connected to his prior indulgence of them as a parent.

Another commentator provides us with why it is and how it is that Eli's sin of omission had such horrible consequences; "...There is an age when children may be restrained, and if that age is allowed to pass the power of restraining them goes along with it."

(15) So Samuel lay down until morning, and opened the doors of the house of the LORD. And Samuel was afraid to tell Eli the vision. (16) Then Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son!" He answered, "Here I am." (17) And he said, "What *is* the word that *the* LORD spoke to you? Please do not hide *it* from me. God do so to you, and more also, if you hide anything from me of all the things that He said to you." (18) Then Samuel told him everything, and hid nothing from him. And he said, "It *is* the LORD. Let Him do what seems good to Him."

- Couple of thoughts here as we bring the chapter to an end, first, you've got to know that this must have been extremely difficult for Samuel.
- The reason being is that Eli is the high priest and his elder no less, yet he has to deliver a most horrific message of God's judgment to him.
- Even worse Samuel is only a twelve-year old speaking this to an old man and he doesn't know how Eli will react to him as the messenger.

- This begs the question of how was Samuel able to speak the truth to Eli when he knew full well that it would be a very hard word to hear.
- I believe we need look no further than, Samuel loved Eli, and as such he spoke the truth in love to Eli, because of his genuine love for Eli.
- The Lord has been ministering this truth to me over the years; it's not just that I must speak truth lovingly if I'm loving I must speak truth.

Of this one commentator writes; "Bitter truths must be spoken, however they be taken; and if ministers be mannerly in the form, yet in the matter of their message let them be resolute."

- Another reason Samuel was able to speak the truth to Eli was because of his love for God, and his obedience to the commands of God.
- Actually, they both go hand in hand in that if I love God with all my heart, soul, and mind, it will be evidenced by how I obey His commands.
- This is why, in both the Old and New Testament, we have warnings concerning the dangers of only telling people what they want to hear.

Ezekiel 13:10 NKJV "Because, indeed, because they have seduced My people, saying, 'Peace!' when *there is* no peace—and one builds a wall, and they plaster it with untempered *mortar*—

Acts 20:26-27 NIV Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of all men. (27) For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God.

2 Timothy 4:2-3 NIV Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. (3) For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.

(19) So Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. (20) And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel *had been* established as a prophet of the LORD. (21) Then the LORD appeared again in Shiloh. For the LORD revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD.

- I can't think of a better way to end this chapter, and with it, our Bible study, as God blesses Samuel establishing him as a prophet in Israel.
- I suppose it shouldn't come as any surprise in the sense that this is how it ends for those who walk in obedience no matter how hard it is.
- Conversely, this how also how it ends for those who walk in disobedience, all because they found it too difficult to do what was hard to do.