

SPEAK LORD FOR YOUR SERVANT IS LISTENING

Text: I Samuel 3:9,10

Key Word: Listen

Key Thought: We Need to Listen When God Speaks

The Bible is the only book on earth containing God's spoken Word in a Written form. So we can never say we don't know what God wants in our world and in our lives. His clarity is His clarion call.

I. THE BACKGROUND BEFORE SAMUEL'S LIFE

Many parts in the Scriptures stand out in today's day and age. This story of the birth and early life of Samuel is one that I believe is vital to understand in the beginning of this year. Our nation has many similarities to Israel at this time of history (1105 BC). The first seven books of the Bible reveal many ups and downs in those whom God chose. There were many things recorded NOT to pattern our lives after. But then came this story to offer hope when God was being defied even by priestly leaders. It came when the light of God was nearly extinguished.

God set up His nation as one consisting of 12 tribes under God. It was the only theocracy in the world and it was about to change to a monarchy beginning with King Saul and then King David of whom Samuel would both anoint. There is no political system to match what God had originally given them. They made a foolish decision to be like the nations around them with a king to lead them and go before them into battle (I Samuel 8:20).

*** I've met a lot of leaders in the Army who were very competent; but they didn't have character. And for every job they did well, they sought reward in the form of promotions, in the form of awards and decorations, in the form of getting ahead at the expense of someone else, in the form of another piece of paper that awarded them another degree; a sure road to the top. You see, these were competent people, but they lacked character.

I've also met a lot of leaders who had superb character but who lacked competence. They weren't willing to pay the price of leadership, to go the extra mile because that's what it took to be a great leader.

And that's sort of what it's all about. To lead in the 21st century; to take soldiers, sailors, airmen into battle; you will be required to have both character and competence. ***

Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf:
Speech to the Corps of Cadets at the U.S. Military Academy
in Reader's Digest

II. THE BASIS FOR SAMUEL'S LIFE

The basis for Samuel's life is vital to understand if we wish to be led by the way God guides us. One vital part is to understand the meaning of his name. The first chapter shows how Elkanah and his wife Hannah (one of 2 wives) were devoted to God and offered sacrifices above the requirements so God would hear their prayers for Hannah to have a son.

Hannah was so distressed that she couldn't speak out the cry of her heart because it had caused her great anguish and grief. Eli, the high priest at Shiloh accused her of being drunk. When she convinced him that she wasn't drunk he prayed a blessing upon her.

"Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him."

I Samuel 1:17

They returned to their home in Ramah (after worshipping God) which was about 14 miles away (which was also about 5 miles from Jebus which became Jerusalem under King David). In time she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. The name she gave him was very important. This became the basis for his life. The name "**Samuel**" means "**heard by God.**"

So Samuel was not only birthed on the basis of prayer but he became one who learned early in life to distinguish the voice of God from other leaders including Eli, the high priest. It was part of his family's spiritual DNA. Hannah's prayer clearly showed that she was a woman who believed that God answered prayers for justice and righteousness to be a great foundation for Israel. She also understood that God didn't always answer prayers in her timing because His timing is always right. I'm sure we've all discovered that in life too often.

Then Hannah prayed and said:

"My heart rejoices in the Lord; in the Lord my horn [strength] is lifted high.

My mouth boasts over my enemies, for I delight in your deliverance.

2. "There is no one holy like the Lord; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God.

3. "Do not keep talking so proudly or let your mouth speak such arrogance, for the Lord is a God who knows, and by him deeds are weighed.

4. "The bows of the warriors are broken, but those who stumbled are armed with strength.

5. Those who were full hire themselves out for food, but those who were hungry are hungry no more. She who was barren has borne seven children, but she who has had many sons pines away.

II. THE BASIS FOR SAMUEL'S LIFE (Contd.)

6. *"The Lord brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up.*

7. *The Lord sends poverty and wealth; he humbles and he exalts.*

8. *He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honor. "For the foundations of the earth are the Lord's; on them he has set the world.*

9. *He will guard the feet of his faithful servants, but the wicked will be silenced in the place of darkness. "It is not by strength that one prevails;*

10. *those who oppose the Lord will be broken. The Most High will thunder from heaven; the Lord will judge the ends of the earth.*

"He will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed."

Samuel's prayer life was a major part that made him a great leader. There is more need today for spiritual leaders to pray than ever in the history of the church. I can personally say that my time in prayer with God has changed greatly in the last few years. I find that short prayer time is now being replaced by much longer times. I also don't speak as much. Waiting for God to respond often takes time to declutter my mind and emotions. There are way too many voices trying to vie for my time. It definitely needs to be a protected part of our day.

*** Are you familiar with the brush-suede shoe called Hush Puppies? It was popular when I was a kid. The brand was all but dead until late 1994. Sales were down to 30,000 pairs a year, mostly sold in backwoods outlets and small-town family stores. Wolverine, the company that makes Hush Puppies, was thinking of phasing out the shoes that made them famous. But then something strange happened.

Two Hush Puppies executives, at a fashion shoot, ran into a stylist from New York who told them the classic Hush Puppies had suddenly become stylish in the hip clubs and bars of downtown Manhattan. They were selling out in resale shops. People were going to the Ma and Pa stores and buying them up.

In the fall of 1995 things began to happen in a hurry. One fashion designer used the shoe in his spring collection. Another designer used the shoes in her show. A third designer in Los Angeles put a twenty-five-foot inflatable basset hound on the roof of his Hollywood store, gutted a gallery next door, and turned it into a Hush Puppies boutique.

(Contd.)

II. THE BASIS FOR SAMUEL'S LIFE (Contd.)

*** In 1995, the company sold 430,000 pairs of the classic Hush Puppies; the next year they sold four times that, and the year after that still more, until Hush Puppies were once again the main shoe of the young American male. How do you explain this kind of explosive growth? It has been called “**the tipping point.**”

The tipping point is when an idea or social behaviour crosses a threshold, and begins to spread like wildfire. It is when a small, but targeted, effort can cause an explosion, or decline, in an idea or behaviour. **Spiritually, prayer is that small, but targeted, effort that can cause an explosion in spiritual growth, or a dramatic decline in sinful behaviour.** ***

III. THE BEGINNING OF SAMUEL'S LIFE

“The boy ministered before the LORD under Eli the priest . . .

18. But Samuel was ministering before the Lord—a boy wearing a linen ephod.

19. Each year his mother made him a little robe and took it to him when she went up with her husband to offer the annual sacrifice.

I Samuel 2:11,18,19

Samuel became a servant of God well before the normal age of 30 years for a priest. I don't remember anyone of his age wearing an ephod which was the garment of the high priest. King David also wore one when he danced before the LORD during the return of the Ark of Covenant.

Eli's sons Hophni and Phinehas provoked the LORD to anger by refusing to follow God's clear instructions on how they would serve Him and His people. God sent a prophet to warn Eli that He was about to judge the entire family. He and his sons had despised God and so his entire family would die at an early age. The family did not listen to the warning God which was much different than Samuel.

“If one person sins against another, God may mediate for the offender; but if anyone sins against the Lord, who will intercede for them?” His sons, however, did not listen to their father's rebuke, for it was the Lord's will to put them to death.

(Contd.)

III. THE BEGINNING OF SAMUEL'S LIFE (Contd.)

26. And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the Lord and with people.”

I Samuel 2:25,26

Samuel's example was a breath of fresh air for the nation in comparison with Eli and his family. The people became disgusted with their actions and they were known as scoundrels because they had no regard for the LORD (I Samuel 2:12).

To set up a new kingdom meant God was going to have to take down the present kingdom and its leadership. The day of awakening came and this saddening priesthood was about to be changed. The changeover was to be abrupt.

There is no doubt that God had been speaking but His Words were falling on deaf ears. They didn't have ears to hear. They refused to follow after God even though they knew the results would bring about death. So God just redirected His words.

*“The boy Samuel ministered before the Lord under Eli. In those days the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions . . .
3. The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the house of the Lord, where the ark of God was.*

I Samuel 3:1,3

Samuel placed himself in a position close to God's presence. It was during this time, in this place that the LORD called out to Samuel by his name.

“Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord: The word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him.”

I Samuel 3:7

Their relationship was about to change. Samuel's willingness to be close to God, learn from God's Word and listen to God's voice opened the way for a lifetime of learning.

“Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.”

I Samuel 3:9 & 10

III. THE BEGINNING OF SAMUEL'S LIFE (Contd.)

“The Lord was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of Samuel's words fall to the ground.”

I Samuel 3:19

This is in direct contrast to what happened to Eli and his household for turning their backs on God and His Word.

“Therefore I swore to the house of Eli, ‘The guilt of Eli's house will never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering.’”

I Samuel 3:14

Sad news and happy news combine together at the closing of this chapter.

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Date: Jan 10/21

Place: FCA

Time: 10:30 Am

Song: In Your Presence (Father I am Waiting) - Bm

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I Samuel 2:11,18,19; I Samuel 2:25,26; I Samuel 2:12; I Samuel 3:1,3; I Samuel 3:7; I Samuel 3:9 & 10; I Samuel 3:19; I Samuel 3:14