



4 | 1 SAMUEL 3

SPEAK LORD, YOUR SERVANT HEARS

Listening to Christ is the happiest thing you can do.

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Introduction

We are in a series in the book of 1 Samuel called “Exalting God’s King.” We are learning how to exalt Jesus Christ as King in our lives. Our title this morning is: “Speak Lord, Your Servant Hears.”

God speaks. Most people want God to talk to them. They want to cash in on that personal relationship. Today, people want God to speak, but they don’t want the God of the Bible. They want the God they have pictured and imagined in their own mind. A small percentage of people will discount the idea of God’s existence. I’ve heard my friend Paul Alexander puts it this way. He says, most people fit into one of three categories when it comes to God. Here’s the first one. It’s a popular worldview today that **God is dead, and that modern science and multiculturalism has killed him**. The Bible then must just be a projection of people’s imaginations from a long time ago. They look at the Bible as a work of fiction like Thor and Zeus and all the other mythical writings.

Of course, the Bible is radically different than all that because it is absolutely historical. Everything that is written has a time and place that can be verified and has been verified in striking detail. But most people would never take the time to investigate, because they are glad God is dead. Then he can’t tell me what to do. The truth is our Sunday school children could refute most atheists. Their simple and deluded arguments depend on the ignorance of the masses.

A second and more popular modern view of God is the idea that **God does exist, but he is accepting of any way I want to live**. He’s completely tolerant. He’s passive. In this view, he’s “the perfect gentleman.” He’s kind of neutered. He would never stick his nose in your personal life or business. He’s happy if you follow his law or if you don’t. It’s really up to you. He’s happy with whatever attention you see fit to throw his way. But he knows you’re busy, so he’s not demanding you spend time with him or serve him. And of course, he is that best of all friends because he’s always there for you. That is if you feel like you need him. It doesn’t matter how you treat him.¹ Now you would be offended if someone treated you this way, but you are glad for God to be this way. In this view, God exists, but he’s a god perfectly tailored to your own imagination. If you are honest, he ok with whatever you do, because he is you. You’ve created this concept to excuse your conscience and pretend you know the living God when you don’t. But that’s probably the majority view in America.

But let me present a third view. The **one true Creator God is alive**; he is **personal**, and he has **revealed himself in the Bible**, which is his word to you and me. So my question is this: **What would happen if we actually read the Bible and took it at face value** for what it says it is—the word of God? What if the Bible is actually true, and God is actually personal, and what if he is actually your Creator and Judge? What if everything you do depends on his very power?

And further, what if he knows everything about you? What if he’s holy and righteous, and cannot dwell with sin? What if he judges sin perfectly in the lake of fire, and what if God’s not wishing for anyone to perish, but if you ignore him you will perish? What if there is a one hundred percent chance that you will absolutely stand before him, possibly even before the end of this year? What if he sent his Son to take the full justice of God for our sin? And what if whoever puts their

¹ Adapted from Paul Alexander, *Does God Use Kids?* (South Elgin, IL: Grace Covenant Baptist Church, 4 Oct 2020), sermon on 1 Samuel 3.

trust in him will bypass the lake of fire and have eternal life? Because that is exactly what the Bible teaches. I believe it is true. And if you are here today, and you haven't come to that conclusion, I want to ask you, what if the Bible is absolutely, one hundred percent true? How would that change your life today?

Eli and His Sons

There are people in the Bible that we are going to read about today that **did not take the Bible seriously at all**, and they paid a heavy price, both in their lives on earth, and after their lives were over. They are still paying a heavy price today, since we will all live forever somewhere for all eternity. You can say you don't believe it, but it doesn't remove you from reality. I can say, "I don't believe in trucks, but if I put my Lazy Boy on I-90, I will intimately discover the reality of trucks."

I want to present some Scripture to you today. My hope is that you will consider it and be humble and take it very seriously. If you will do that, I promise you that God will speak to you through his word, and it will be life changing.

Our text in 1 Samuel 3 begins with the absolute delight of hearing from God. It is through his word, the Bible that we know our Creator, the one who made us. Knowing him is what gives us meaning and full satisfaction and happiness in life. We also see how devastating it is to ignore God when he is speaking.

Key Thought: How you respond to God's word will be the source of either your happiness or misery. Listening to Christ will bring the highest joy to your life.

1. THE DELIGHT OF HEARING GOD (3:1-10)

It was the end of the time of the Judges in Israel. In fact, Samuel is the last judge. God is not talking to his people. They don't want to hear him. So before we really consider how the most happy people on the face of the earth are those who believe and trust God's word, I want to consider the other side. The most miserable people on the planet, despite riches or fame or unlimited fleshly living, are those who reject God's word. **God's word bring delight. The lack of God's word brings misery.**

WITHOUT GOD'S WORD, YOU CANNOT BE HAPPY

1 Samuel 3:1 | Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord in the presence of Eli. And the word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision.

Consider the misery of Samuel's time. In contrast to the joy of Samuel ministering to the Lord, we have a people who are miserable without the voice of God in their lives.

- Without God, all we have is the echo of our empty soul.

- Without God, we have noisy hearts filled with bitterness and anxiety.
- Without God's word, we try to cram every delight from this world, and as wonderful as they are, we are miserable. With all our materialism coming out our noses, we are a people starving for happiness. Miserable. Why? Because we were made to delight in God through his word.

The word of God is “rare in those days” of Samuel. There is no frequent vision. There's no prophet. God has been silent for some time. The young boy, Samuel, is training to be a prophet. And he is faithful, but he's not a prophet yet. In fact, **God was not speaking very much in those days.** And there is **so much misery in Israel:** fornication, broken families, women treated as prostitutes. It's sounds like our day: miserable. And what's the reason? “The word of the Lord was rare in those days” (3:1). **The one who is supposed to be leading the people to God is the current judge, or governor of Israel, and he is a blind priest named Eli.**

1 Samuel 3:2 | At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his own place.

Eli's dim eyesight matched the blindness of God's people at the time. The people were as spiritual blind as Eli was physically blind, because the word of God was not being taught. The people were not encountering God personally.

Those days were spiritually dark days, not unlike today. It was the waning days of the Judges in Israel. They were days where families were hurting. Immorality went unchecked. **They were days when religious people were being anything but godly.** The church had become all but indistinguishable from the world. You could even make the argument that the church looked worse than the world. **It's not much different than our days.** When God sees the church acting like that **he withdraws and gives us the silent treatment.**² The people of Samuel's day are deaf to God. Like it says in the book of Judges, which is around the same time period,

Judges 21:25 | Everyone did what was right in his own eyes

Misery abounded because God wasn't speaking to Israel. What's more is they were glad he was not speaking. They didn't want to hear it. They were miserable, and they didn't know God. They didn't know that the greatest blessing they could ever have was to know God through his word. Amos later describes this desperate condition of Israel and in our country today.

Amos 8:11 | “Behold, the days are coming,” declares the Lord God, “when I will send a famine on the land—not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.”

Can I repeat that **without God in the center of your life, you cannot be happy. It's impossible.**

How many pastors and Christians are miserable because they are as blind spiritually as Eli is physically? Where does man's satisfaction and happiness come from? Knowing God in his word. The worst thing that could ever happen to a human being or a family or a nation is a famine of God's word. Yet, too many congregations often bring a self-imposed famine. On their own churches still today. We read about it in 2 Timothy 4.

² Ibid.

2 Timothy 4:3-4 | For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, ⁴ and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

Too many congregations often bring a self-imposed famine by trying to please people instead of preaching the truth of God's word. At most churches, they teach psychology. They teach self-help. They preach politics and political parties. They entertain the goats instead of feeding the sheep. And these churches are filled with miserable people.

Let me tell you the secret to glorified joy and happiness according to the Bible. Know the word. Pray the word. Preach the word. Don't edit the word. The word is God's authoritative voice to do you good and give him glory.

Let me give you a warning.

Matthew 4:4 | Man lives not on bread alone but on every word that comes from his mouth.

When we choose to live without God's word it may be a feast for your flesh, but it is a famine for your soul. **You cannot be happy without God as the center of your life. And you cannot know God apart from his word.**

In stark contrast to the evil sons of Eli, we see how God uses the humble and lowly boy Samuel. He's about to awaken his word, and therefore awaken happiness in Israel.

THROUGH GOD'S WORD, YOU CAN BE GLORIOUSLY HAPPY

1 Samuel 3:3 | The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was.

With God, through the Spirit, we can have "joy unspeakable and full of glory." Glorified joy. We are going to learn that it is only through God's word that you can be gloriously happy. God's word was rare in those days, but God was about to speak. He was about to open the floodgates of his word. We're going to see later that it's a **hard word of judgment**, but it's a good word (3:11-14). **You've got to get the spiritual cancer out of your life before you can be happy.** We are going to see that. But first we see Samuel lying down in the temple.

What is the "Lamp of God"?

1 Samuel 3:3a | The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord.

As Samuel is lying down in the main area of the temple, we see there is the "lamp of God" which would have burned all night long. What is this "lamp of God"? "The lamp of God" refers to the **menorah in the tabernacle**, which was to remain lit all night (Exo 27:21; Lev 24:1-4). The menorah is the lampstand with seven candlesticks. It was **lit all night to illustrate that we have**

hope in Jesus even in the darkest of nights. The menorah, with seven candlesticks, burning with olive oil, was a picture and illustration of the presence of God.

What is the “Temple”?

1 Samuel 3:3b | Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was.

Temple? What is that? At first, tabernacle would have been at Shiloh, like the one Moses had in the wilderness, but it looks like a semi-permanent structure was built here at Shiloh. This would be a **pre-Solomonic temple**. We don't get any mention of when or how this temple was built, but 1 Samuel 1:9 assumes this building had doorposts and chapter 3:15 says it has doors. **Tents don't have doors and door posts.** So what is this so-called “temple”? The short answer here is that this was a **mini temple like the ones archaeologists** have found elsewhere from the Canaanite period.

It would have had a **large room** (this is where Samuel was sleeping). Then, like Solomon's temple, there would have been a much **smaller room with the ark of the covenant**, the box that contained the ten commandment tablets among other things. There also would have been a **courtyard**, as in Solomon's temple, but smaller. And on the outside of the courtyard were rooms, or **dormitories** for the priests that were on duty to sleep in. It was in one of these rooms where Eli slept. But there was Samuel, in the main temple room, lying down, trying to rest, but still on duty, since Eli was almost blind.

Why is the Prophet of God so Important?

Now notice, we have the ark of God and the lamp of God, both which represent God's presence. **This is where happiness is**, right? Well, **almost**. We have God's presence, but that doesn't do us any good unless God speaks and allows us to get to know him and draw near to him. And we can't do that in the Old Testament without a **prophet**, or unless you are reading the word.

Remember, that while God is omnipresent, everywhere present, he cannot be known unless he reveals himself to us. Just like you can be physically present with someone, but you don't get to know them until you open your mouth and start talking. That's why God's word is so important. **I can tell what I think God is like, and so can you, but we will be completely inaccurate unless God tells us what he is like. And we find his description of himself in his word.**

So it looks like we have the ingredients for happiness in Israel. The lamp of God. The ark of God in the temple of God. But wait. **We need God to speak. We can't be happy unless God speaks. Enter Samuel.** Young Samuel is God's man. He's young, but he's available and he's tender to God.

1 Samuel 3:4-6 | Then the Lord called Samuel, and he said, “Here I am!”⁵ and ran to Eli and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” But he said, “I did not call; lie down again.” So he went and lay down.⁶ And the Lord called again, “Samuel!” and Samuel arose and went to Eli and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” But he said, “I did not call, my son; lie down again.”

Samuel had filled the lampstand with oil; the menorah lampstand would burn all night, but it was close to daybreak, and the lamp was about to go out. That's when Samuel suddenly hears a voice. Samuel thinks, "Blind Eli must need my help. I'd better run and help him." But Eli lets Samuel know it wasn't him. "Go back to sleep," he says.

Samuel again mistakenly thinks the voice of the Lord is Eli calling him. Yet the Lord is speaking to Samuel, though this is all brand new to him. **The era of the prophets is about dawn in Israel.** Samuel will be the first great prophet of this era that will serve with the kings of Israel, speak for God, and give us the Bible as we know it.

HAPPINESS COMES WHEN GOD'S WORD IS PROCLAIMED

We must see that people cannot know God and be happy in God unless God's word is proclaimed. It has to be communicated. So here comes the least likely person to do it. A child. A young person. There's a mouse in the house folks! Maybe he's around twelve years old; we can't know for sure. But he's the least likely person to be the preacher. And yet, here he is. He's never known the Lord as a prophet.

1 Samuel 3:7 | Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him.

Samuel did not know the Lord as a prophet. He'd not yet received a revelation from the Almighty. He had grown up in the presence of the Lord and learned to serve in his tabernacle, yet he had not yet encountered him as a prophet. He didn't know the Lord in that way yet. But that was about to change.

A TENDER HEART TO GOD IS THE FASTEST WAY TO HAPPINESS

Finally, Samuel, with the help of Eli, gets it! God is calling Samuel as a prophet. God is speaking! Samuel has a tender heart, an obedient heart. This is the fastest way to joy and grace for himself and for the entire nation.

1 Samuel 3:8-10 | And the Lord called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy. ⁹Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down, and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant hears.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. ¹⁰And the Lord came and stood, calling as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant hears."

Enthusiasm of Samuel

Here it is maybe around 4 in the morning. Samuel is ready to serve no matter what time it is. We are reminded that he is still a boy. This response should be the prototype for the Christian. It's almost daybreak, and the boy is running! I don't do anything fast at 3 or 4 in the morning.

Nearness of God

I've always found this image of God standing by Samuel so interesting and curious. Here, the living God comes and stands before a young boy in the little Shiloh temple. A similar thing happened to Paul when he almost started a riot at the temple in Jerusalem, and he had to be whisked away to the soldiers' barracks. While he was there, he testifies to a similar experience as Samuel.

Acts 23:11 | The following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome."

So God stand with Samuel and speaks to him. How can the God of the universe walk into Samuel's room? **Samuel experiences what we would call a "theophany."** This is like Jacob wrestling with God. But here God actually walks right up to young Samuel and speaks to him; the great and majestic God of the universe walks into Samuel's room because he wants to speak to the boy. This text testifies that God really speaks, and we can really hear him. The remainder of Samuel's life is a story of a man listening to God.³

Now we read about this and we kind of long to experience a theophany. **Some of you would love it if God would appear to you and talk like a man.** But really, how sad that we would want to go backward! We have something greater than Samuel. We have the Holy Spirit. God does stand with us and in us, through his word and through his Spirit. You have access to God in an even greater way than the Old Testament saints. He doesn't come right up to us but better: he lives inside us by his Spirit. **Our privileges are much, much greater than Samuel** or any Old Testament saint.

Applications

Here are some important applications.

First, young people, don't let your youth be an obstacle to serve the Lord. Despite his youth and inexperience, the text is unequivocal: God spoke to Samuel. Granted, Samuel didn't know who the voice was, but God continued to speak: four times God spoke to Samuel.⁴

Second, you as a young person should **take God's word seriously.** Samuel as a very young boy knew the Lord, and even at a fairly young age, perhaps 12 years old, he began to know the Lord as a prophet and receive divine revelation. Samuel had to be raised up because Eli would not take God seriously, and his adult sons did not even now the Lord.

Third, **how important it is for those who are raised in Christian homes** to make their own **personal decisions for Christ.** Samuel knew the Lord at a young age and had serious responsibilities in the temple of the Lord.

Fourth, **there should be a tender response when God speaks to you.** We ought to tremble at his word more than the demons do. The demons tremble out of fear of hell, and they know his glory and majesty and justice. And they tremble out of fear. We ought to tremble out of pure joy and infinite love. We are of all people on the planet, the most happy because we have that which cannot be taken away. You can take away relationships, money, reputation, material things, jobs,

³ Thomas, *Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Samuel*, 1 Sa 2:12-3:20.

⁴ Ibid.

bank accounts. But God can never be taken from you. He says, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Heb 13:5).

2. THE DANGER OF IGNORING GOD (3:11-14)

We won't spend much time here, but this may be the most convicting and challenging portion of this text. God now gives a frightening prophecy to Samuel about Eli and his sons, who had ignored God. And we find a need for all of us as men to take God seriously, to take God at his word, to take responsibility to lead as men with God's word. Listen to the prophecy the Lord gives Samuel.

1 Samuel 3:11-14 | Then the Lord said to Samuel, "Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel at which the two ears of everyone who hears it will tingle. ¹²On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. ¹³And I declare to him that I am about to punish his house forever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them. ¹⁴Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever."

God's going to make the ears of those in Israel tingle. They will be amazed at God's judgment. They've not been used to hearing from God. So when God actually begins to speak, the culture is so sinful, their ears tingle.

IGNORING GOD HARDENS THE HEART

Their ears tingle because God's word hardens the heart. When the leadership ignores the voice of God, God's judgment begins. God says it's going to be so bad, you won't believe it.

1 Samuel 3:11 | Then the Lord said to Samuel, Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel at which the two ears of everyone who hears it will tingle.

When a person who has great light rejects the truth, there is a serious hardening effect. The Puritans used had a saying about this.

The same sun that softens the wax hardens the clay.

The problem is the same message that impacts one person can actually cause another person to have a hardened heart. They become hardened by the very truth that should have softened them. They are condemned because they reject the very message that should have set them free.

Samuel was softened by God's word. But Hophni and Phinehas ignored God's word and were hardened. Their doom was sealed, and as a result, the Philistines would come and execute Eli and both of his apostate, wicked sons.

If you check out from God's word, you are actually hardening your heart to God. That's a very dangerous thing.

Truths that Make the Ears Tingle

When God begins to speak, and we confront this culture with God's word, people's ears will tingle. They'll be like, "That's outrageous! That's unbelievable! God would never say that!" That's our culture. And as believers, we say, "Let God be true, and every person proved to be a liar." **You see when the truth is preached, the ears tingle, and people awaken out of their sleep.** That's the whole point. God's going to do something that's going to shock people out of their spiritual deadness. That's why we preach the word, to awaken people. We call on people to stop ignoring God's word and instead soften their heart.

All we have to do is **preach God's word** to make people's ears tingle.

When we quote Jesus and he says he's **the exclusive way to heaven.** There is no other way. He says, "No one comes to the Father except through Jesus" (Jn 14:6). People are shocked. They have a choice: harden your heart trying to forget it or receive it, surrender to it.

When we say, that the **Bible is God-breathed** and without error in anything it says. It is the final authority for life and doctrine everyone's ears tingle. We pray for awakening.

When God says that **he created mankind male and female in his image.** And he said it was very good.

When we say that marriage is between one man and one woman for life, and that **all sexuality outside biblical the marriage bond is immoral** and damnable, people's ear tingle. They say no way! But it's true whether you agree or not.

When we say that **Jesus is coming back** to judge the living and the dead, and those who don't repent and turn to Christ will burn in **eternal conscious torment in hell** for all eternity, people can't believe it.

And when we say **God became human flesh** to remove our sin and shame, and he's the only substitute for you and for me that God will accept, or that we are saved apart from our good deeds or human merit, but only by the mercy of God, people's ears tingle. They are not used to hearing this.

God doesn't change. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He wants his heaven full. He wants to awaken those who think they are alive but are not. You may have hardened your heart, but when God starts speaking, your ears will tingle. May God's word be preached to make people's ears tingle, and **make their cold, dead hearts come alive.** Don't ignore God's word, because it hardens your heart.

IGNORING GOD HASTENS GOD'S JUDGMENT

We hear this message God is giving Samuel, and it's not positive. It's not grace. It's a **message of judgment.**

1 Samuel 3:12-14 | On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. ¹³And I

declare to him that I am about to punish his house forever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them. ¹⁴Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever.

This seems harsh. God is cleaning house. **Judgment begins at the house of God.** Here's the point. The Lord now addresses the self-serving worshipped by his word through his young prophet. And we might be tempted to say, "Why is the Old Testament so 'judgey'?" And we would be very much ignoring how "judgey" the New Testament is.

If you think that the God of the Old Testament is harsh and judging just remember that Jesus says to Christians in the New Testament that **if you have a lukewarm self-serving attitude towards worship** you're not a believer and you will be **vomited out of his mouth.**

Oh listen, it was too late for Eli and his sons. For his sons, the prophecy is: "The iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever" (4:14). **"Your sons are going to hell.** They passed the point of no return."

I say with Paul that when you hear the word of God, you need to be tender to it, and turn to God immediately.

Hebrews 3:15 | Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.

We look at the final verses of this chapter, and we finally see some hope.

3. THE DARING TO SPEAK FOR GOD (3:15-21)

The Bible tells us that Christians are the godly who are as bold as a lion. Indeed, all cowards are condemned in the Bible.

Revelation 21:8 | But as for the cowardly, the faithless, ... and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.

GOD'S MESSAGE IS CRUSHING

1 Samuel 3:15 | Samuel lay until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the Lord. And Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli.

Poor Samuel. How do you go to sleep after a message so severe? Of course, he was afraid to tell the message to Eli.

Samuel lay all night and thought about his vision of God. Just thinking about it made him shudder. After his prophetic vision, Samuel had a choice. Give into fear or walk in faith. Him opening the door of the tabernacle seems to say narratively, that **Samuel is the new gatekeeper**

of God's house. Neither Eli nor his sons guarded the doorway faithfully, but now with Samuel, it was a new day. Samuel was going to bring courage and integrity to the ministry of Israel.

GOD'S MESSAGE RISKS CONFLICT

1 Samuel 3:16-17 | But Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son." And he said, "Here I am." ¹⁷And Eli said, "What was it that he told you? Do not hide it from me. May God do so to you and more also if you hide anything from me of all that he told you."

Samuel would rather keep the sad message in his own heart, but Eli asked him to tell him all; so he did. Eli just had to know.

OUR MESSAGE REQUIRES COURAGE

Samuel chose to do something Hophni and Phineas and even Eli refused to do. Samuel did the hard thing that honored God, even if it hurt those near and dear to his heart.

1 Samuel 3:18 | So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. And he said, "It is the Lord. Let him do what seems good to him."

What is it that God is calling you to do, even though it is hard? We need to pray for each other for a holy boldness. We need to "speak the truth in love."

Eli's response at first is comforting. This is the first ray of light we see from him, or so it seems. I mean he says, "It is the Lord." "He's sovereign." So far so good. But really, we see that Eli just doesn't want to take responsibility.

Eli makes Samuel swear to tell him everything God said. And God says the sins of his sons will never be atoned for or forgiven.

He seems hardly phased. He's even casual about. It's really hard to know what to make of that. After a lifetime of throwing up his hands, he says, "What am I supposed to do?"

This is an excuse. He's been doing this for 40 years. It's an underreaction, masquerading as righteous. He's minimizing and understating his response. "Oh well, God will be God." It's the same attitude he has toward his sons. "Oh well, all the fornication and wickedness. You know boys will be boys." Here is Eli the prototype for the passive man. What we find is passive men will not take God's word seriously. They throw up their hands in the air. "God is sovereign," they say. But they do nothing.

Eli doesn't weep. He doesn't warn his sons to repent. He's just like, "Nothing to see here." He's still sitting on his hands. Stuff happens, and he says, "What could I do? And he does nothing."

Well, let me speak to the men of our congregation. You can and must get into the lives of other men and lead. You are the gatekeeper. Married men, you must lead your wife with humility. Fathers, you must guide your children to the heavenly Father. As a men, we jump into the war and into the line of fire, and we do battle for the Lord's kingdom. Passive men have damned our country. We need men who will be like Samuel and be the gatekeepers of their homes, their churches, their businesses.

Stop making excuses. Stop serving yourself. Start caring. Get into the lives of those who are struggling. You are your brother's keeper. It takes **courage** to take action. It takes courage to stop the cycle of blameshifting. It takes courage to take responsibility for where your family is at, where your church is at. It takes courage to humbly speak God's word to your fellow brother or sister in Christ.

OUR MESSAGE IS CONFIRMED BY THE LORD

1 Samuel 3:19-21 | And 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 was established as a prophet of the Lord.²¹ And the Lord appeared again at Shiloh, for the Lord revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the Lord.

Samuel spoke to Eli. God said he'd start working. And God established Samuel as a prophet. **God let none of his words fall to the ground** and all Israel from Dan to Beersheba. That's like saying in America, from **New York to LA**. Samuel was established as a prophet of the Lord and the Lord appeared again and Shiloh for the lord revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the Lord. After reading the ambiguity and confusion of Eli's family, it's so refreshing. Samuel is inaugurated as a prophet.

This event was a turning point in history. Up to now, God had not spoken to the people in frequent or wide-spread ("open") visions (3:1); but now everyone knew that Samuel was God's prophet and that the Lord was with him. The Lord was now willing to appear once again and speak.

Applications

Several practical lessons are found in these chapters:

1. **Never underestimate the power of sin in a family.** Eli's sons needed discipline, but he pampered them instead. This would cost him his life and the life of his sons, and eventually cost the family the priesthood.

2. **Never underestimate the power of prayer in a home.** Hannah and Elkanah were people of prayer, and God answered their prayers. We are blessed today because of the dedication of Hannah, for through her, God gave the world Samuel, the last of the judges and the first of the national prophets.

3. **Never underestimate the way God speaks to children and young people.** The training of children in spiritual things is a great responsibility that we must not neglect.⁵ We have a church full of Samuels.

4. **Never underestimate the power of your response to God's word.** Ignore it, and you will be miserable and cursed. Heed it and obey it, and you will be blessed. Let God's word get a hold of you.

⁵ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993), 1 Sa 3.

Conclusion

Once I had my worship **music blaring**, and I was on my way to a medical appointment. I saw red and blue lights a ways behind me. I didn't know who they were for, so I kept driving. For about a mile this continued, but I was distracted, and turned on the Bible. I heard his siren come on. Then I heard the voice over the police car's loudspeaker, "Sir, I'm trying to pull you over." No, I didn't respond, "Speak for your servant hears." I will say this: miraculously I did not get a ticket.

But more seriously, **is God trying to pull you over? Is he trying to get your attention?** The best thing you can do is listen. Say, "Speak Lord, for your servant hears."

Take God seriously. Let his word have its grip on you. That's the happiest and most fruitful life you can live.