

Message #7**I Samuel 2:18-26**

According to the Apostle Paul's writings in many passages, God gives a man his job and God keeps track of how a man does his job (Eph. 6:5-8; Col. 3:22-25; Titus 1:9-11). In fact, a person's job becomes their mission field and God wants to use that person on his or her job to make a statement for His grace.

Now in the secular world, some people that you work with are godless. They live lives that are corrupt. Their whole talk and lifestyle is evil and immoral. Their goals are anything but God-honoring. When a believer finds himself or herself in that context, what should the believer do? This text would certainly teach that one needs to be a great witness by his work ethic and consistent testimony.

Now when you work for a Christian organization, you do not expect to be surrounded by godless, immoral, evil people. In fact, I would not hire someone who was that way. I would not permit someone like that to work for me or this church.

Imagine the shock it must have been for Samuel to work at the Tabernacle and be surrounded by godless, worthless people. Samuel was a young boy growing up in the tabernacle and those surrounding him were totally corrupt.

The religious leaders of Israel, Eli's sons, were godless and worthless men who stole from God and were immoral. Samuel was growing up in that environment and yet, even as a young boy and young man he stayed faithful to God. He continued to grow in the midst of this evil and God used Him to accomplish amazing things.

What we see here is this:

IN THE MIDST OF A CORRUPT RELIGIOUS WORLD, GOD WANTS HIS PEOPLE TO BE FAITHFUL TO HIM AND THOSE WHO ARE WILL BE BLESSED BY HIM AND GREATLY USED BY HIM.

We live in a corrupt world. We live in a sinful, evil world. Whether it is educational, occupational, social or ecclesiastical, we can still be a great light that shines for the glory of God. Don't overlook this fact: Samuel was a young boy and he was faithful to God. If you who are younger purpose to remain faithful to God in your world when surrounded by that which is evil, God will bless you and use you.

Now there are three inter-related parts to this:

INTER-RELATED PART #1 – The faithful ministry activity of Samuel. 2:18

The first thing we learn about Samuel is he was ministering before the LORD as a young boy wearing a linen ephod. The Hebrew construction of the words “was ministering” means that this was his ongoing lifestyle. This was what he was continually doing with his life.

It is specifically stated in **verse 18** that he was wearing a “linen ephod.” Now an ephod was a garment that covered the shoulders, which was sleeveless. It was secured with a belt or girdle that went around the waist area.

This piece of clothing is specifically a priestly garment (I Sam. 22:18) and only those from the tribe of Levi were permitted to wear it. In fact, the High Priest wore a very special ephod (Ex. 28:6ff.). Hans Hertzberg said whoever wore one of these linen ephods was “characterized as a priest” (*I & II Samuel*, p. 35).

The purpose of giving us this clothing data is to show us that Samuel was from the tribe of Levi (I Chron. 6:22-28) and he functioned as a little priest in sacred service. He was a young boy, but he was very priestly and very serious about God and God considered what he was doing to be very sacred and very special.

By the way, I want us to notice that God did not construct some children’s church or children’s temple. He was a young boy serving in the sacred Tabernacle.

I believe that young boys and girls need to be taught how to sit in church and in a worship service. They need to be trained that they are to take this seriously. Children are not too young to sin. They are not too young to die. They are not too young to listen. They are not too young to pray, sing and learn.

This is a very rare verse in the Word of God, but it speaks volumes to young people. If you are a young person and you go to church to worship God and to hear the Word of God, God will greatly bless you and use you. You may be surrounded by kids who are goof-offs, who could care less about God. But if you will purpose at a young age to be serious about God, you will see God do some amazing things with you and for you.

Back in 1853, there was an educator whose name was Reverend Engle, who wrote a letter to a mother about her six-year-old boy. He sent the letter home and the letter said that he felt the boy should be taken out of school because he was “too stupid to learn.” That boy’s name was Thomas Alva Edison.

Polycarp, the church martyr of Smyrna, came to faith in Jesus Christ when he was nine. Jonathan Edwards came to faith in Jesus Christ when he was seven. Matthew Henry came to faith in Jesus Christ when he was 11. Charles Spurgeon said he began to get interested in spiritual things when he was 12.

Don't minimize the commitment of a young boy or girl. Of all the children alive, only one boy was serving God in His tabernacle. Only one boy was wearing the linen ephod as a priest.

The truth is most boys and girls who go to church will probably not be very serious about God and His Word, but if you purpose to put the Lord first in your life, you will see God do great things with you and for you as you get older.

INTER-RELATED PART #2 – The faithful ministry activity of Samuel's parents. 2:19-21

Every year Hannah would make a different sized robe to bring to Samuel. The word “robe” (meil) indicates that this was a special garment. It was a longer outer garment that was also worn by Levitical priests (Lev. 8:7) and others of significance.

It was the kind of garment worn by kings (I Sam. 24:4; I Chron. 15:27); prophets (I Sam. 15:27); men of high rank (Job 2:12) and also women of great rank (II Sam. 13:18). This was a very special kind of robe that Hannah made for Samuel every year. Every year he got a new robe because obviously the previous one would be outgrown and worn out.

Hannah wanted her son to have a nice robe to wear in his service for God, so every year she made Samuel a new robe and took it to him. Now this was not a simple or cheap or quick robe to make. It required many hours that would indicate that Hannah was thinking about Samuel all the time as she was putting in the hours to make this robe.

Dr. J. Vernon McGee said that he and his wife had fun going to stores to buy their grandson a new suit he could wear to church. Every year they would go and find a suit and buy it for their grandson. He would pick the tie and he said of all of the things we bought together over the years, this was the most fun. When parents so esteem God's place of worship that they even care about what their children or grandchildren wear to church, they have a heart like Hannah.

Every year, Elkanah and Hannah would go to the tabernacle in Shiloh to worship God and offer their yearly sacrifice and every year she would give Samuel his new robe.

We learn from **verse 20** that every year Eli would bless Elkanah and Hannah. Eli was still God's leader and he was still in position to pronounce God's blessing. The specific blessing that he would pronounce on them was a blessing of having “more children” (**verse 20**).

Eli would ask God to bless Hannah with more children because she had dedicated her son Samuel to the LORD. **Verse 21** informs us that apparently for five straight years they would leave home and travel to Shiloh, get this blessing and then go back home and within the year Hannah would have a baby. She had three sons and two daughters.

You must wonder if after a while they ever said to Eli, maybe you could pronounce a different kind of blessing this year, our quiver is full. The end of **verse 21** says that Samuel continued to grow before the Lord and **verse 26** says he was growing in stature and in favor both with the LORD and with men.

It is clear that people took notice of this young boy and so did God. This young boy was serious about the Word of God and the work of God and he was growing in favor with God.

Key Observations:

- 1) A young boy or girl can learn and grow and serve and be pleasing to God.
- 2) Parents who continually care that their children recognize the sacredness of worship will be greatly blessed.
- 3) Those who grow in favor with God will spend time at the sacred place of worship.
- 4) Parents and children can be a good, godly witness wherever they are—school, job, church, with friends or relatives.

INTER-RELATED PART #3 – The unfaithful ministry activity of Eli’s sons. 2:22-25

Here is a sorry text about pathetic leadership.

They had no sense of the holiness of God or the reverence of God or respect for God’s property.

They had no sense of how much God hates sin.

They had no sense of the obligations or responsibilities of leadership to be a good example.

They had no sense of God’s purpose—to lead Israel to His blessings through obedience.

They had no self-control over their own lustful passions

These were the supposed spiritual leaders. Frankly there was nothing about them worth following. They were proud, obnoxious, rebellious, immoral, sick leaders.

Verse 22 says that Eli was very old. **We know by the time we get to I Samuel 4:15, he is 98-years-old.** God had blessed him with a long life. Eli loved the Lord and Eli had been a good leader, but the problem was his sons. His sons had taken over the priestly responsibilities.

Eli heard all kinds of things about his sons and none of it was good. At 98-years-old, he could still hear things. The verb “heard” indicates that this was a continual and habitual hearing. This was not some moment out of character for these boys; this was their character. What he was hearing was their “custom” (2:13).

His sons were godless and immoral, not just in their private lives at home, but in their public lives at worship. They were involved in immoral relationships with women right at the tabernacle. The women (Ex. 38:8) were volunteer women that served at the tabernacle. One of their responsibilities was to keep the entrance area into the tabernacle clean (*Ibid.*, p. 37).

These sons of Eli were the priestly spiritual leaders and they were so evil and corrupt that they would not even leave the tabernacle to pursue their immoral behavior, but were involved in their immorality right in their place of worship.

Now Eli did confront his sons. According to **verse 23**, he asked them “why” they were doing these evil things. Now one could think, what is the problem with Eli asking this question?

The problem with this is that Eli did not need to know why they were doing it, what he needed to do was to put a stop to it.

Time for discussing things was over. It was time to root out the evil. **Eli didn't need to talk to his sons, he needed to stop them.** He needed to get them out of their priestly roles.

Verse 24 says that the LORD'S people were "circulating" this. Eli was hearing this from Jehovah's people, not the lost world. God's people were talking about what these boys were doing at worship services. News was spreading. God's people were actually telling Eli that his sons were doing these evil things right at the tabernacle.

According to **verse 25**, Eli warned his sons. He said God will not take this lightly. If you sin against another person, then one may appeal to God and His grace for mediation. But if you go to worship and blatantly sin against God, there is no one to turn to for intercessory mediation. Notice their response, "They would not listen to the voice of their father." They were beyond listening to him. They were so hard-hearted they were beyond redemption.

What these boys were doing at this tabernacle was a direct abominable sin against God. They were in His place of worship and they were committing terrible immorality at this place of worship. In any other sin, one can ask God for forgiveness, but when one blatantly goes to the place of worship and sins like this, it is so serious that God wanted to kill them and put them to death.

These boys had reached the point of no return. God was done offering grace. He would not let them respond to His Word anymore. In fact, God was about to kill them. That was His will. He would carry out His own justice. The text indicates it was God's will to put them to death. This is the desire of God, to kill these two boys.

Do not overlook the scary conjunction "for" at the end of verse 25. The conjunction "for" gives a reason why they would not listen to the voice of their father: God was hardening their hearts because He wanted to kill them. He did not want them tapping into His grace or forgiveness. He was done with them. They would not listen to the voice of their father "because" God wanted to put them to death. In other words, God would not let them repent. He had hardened their hearts because He is going to kill them.

John Wesley said, "They had now sinned away their day of grace. ...God at length gave them up to a reprobate mind and determined to destroy them (II Chron. 25:16)."

As all of this corruption was taking place, we learn in **verse 26** of a great contrast between the corrupt men and the boy Samuel. Samuel was living at the same time and in the same place as they were. They had grown out of favor with God, but he was growing in favor with God and man.

Eli's two sons were known to be great sinners, but Samuel was known to be on his way to become a great man of God.