

Message #10**I Samuel 3:11-21**

Throughout history there have been some impressive things done by teenagers. In 338 B.C., Alexander the Great fought his first battle and conquered his first city at age 16. In 1824, Louis Braille, a blind boy, invented the Braille system for reading at age 15. In 1885, Annie Oakley was challenged by Frank Butler, a world renowned sharpshooter, to a shooting competition, which she won at age 15. In 1976, Nadia Comaneci won three gold medals at the Montreal Olympics and scored a perfect 10 at age 14. Those are impressive things done by teenagers.

But our conclusion is that when Samuel was a young teenager, he did something that was far above and beyond any of those other impressive achievements. He became known throughout all of Israel as a prophet of God, who accurately communicated the word of God.

Samuel certainly illustrates that it is possible to be a young person who is known for accurately understanding and communicating the word of God. One does not have to be old to be known as one who stands for God's truth. That point is obvious from this text. What we see is this:

GOD SOVEREIGNLY CONFIRMED THAT YOUNG SAMUEL WAS HIS PROPHET WHO HAD THE RESPONSIBILITY TO ACCURATELY COMMUNICATE HIS WORD, WHETHER POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE.

To be sure, this is a very unique and sovereign work of God in Samuel's life. But this does show us that it is possible to love God's word and know God's word and even communicate God's word to others regardless of age. One could be 6 or 16 or 26 or 56 or 86. If one is known as one who knows the word and communicates it accurately, one does earn a great name.

We may recall that Samuel was lying down in bed when God audibly and physically called out to him. Three times, Samuel thought it was Eli, but the fourth time God in Person showed up in his room and Samuel said "speak for your servant is listening."

There are three narrative parts to the continuation of this story:

NARRATIVE PART #1 – God speaks to Samuel. 3:11-14

Verse 11 opens with the fact that God spoke His word to Samuel. What God is about to tell Samuel is shocking for a teenager to hear. This is certainly not the love and forgiveness message you would expect.

The first message that Samuel gets from God is not a child-like love message or a grace message or a forgiveness message, it is a very negative and depressing, serious judgment message.

It is very negative threat against one Samuel loves and respects. It certainly would warn Samuel to keep his life clean so that the same kind of thing did not happen to him.

The job of a Bible expositor is to accurately communicate God's word no matter what the text says. Sometimes the text may be positive and uplifting. Sometimes the text may be a negative, warning text.

Now God came to Samuel this first time and gave him two main messages:

Message #1 – I am going to bring an ear-tingling calamity that will leave all Israel talking. **3:11**

The first message Samuel receives is that God is about to do something terrible against national Israel. The phrase “ear-tingling” is something that causes the ears to tingle, and it is one that it is used in the O.T. to refer to God causing some major calamity to hit Israel in which He wipes out and destroys something connected to Him. The result is, it leaves everyone talking about it (Jer. 19:3, 6-9; II Kings 21:12).

God says I am about to do something so negative that it will leave all Israel talking about it. What God would actually do in the next twenty years would be to let the Philistines defeat the Israelites; He would kill Eli's sons and Eli as well; He would allow the Ark to be captured; and He would allow the Sanctuary to become desolate.

The entire nation Israel would know about this, hear about this, and be horrified by this.

Message #2 – I am going to fulfill everything I promised against Eli and his house. **3:12-14**

God was going to judge Eli and his family. The specific calamity that God was going to bring to Israel was that He was going to remove Eli and his sons from service by executing all of them on the same day (I Sam. 2:34). Literally, in one day, God would kill Eli and his sons (I Sam. 4:17-22).

Now the reason why God said He was going to do this is because Eli had not rebuked his sons (**3:13**). According to I Samuel 2:22-25 it appears as though Eli did confront his sons so what exactly did God mean by this?

The Hebrew word “rebuke” (kahah) is one that means to chide them to the point of restraining them. The word means to fail to take a strong stand to the point that you put a stop to it (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 385)

Eli did not like what his sons were doing, but he did not take a strong stand against them and put a stop to it and God held him accountable for that.

Eli was a priest who knew the law of God. He had a responsibility to see to it that his boys were not involved in immoral things at the Temple. In fact, according to the law of God:

- 1) He had the responsibility as a priest to see to it that his boys were stopped (Deut. 17:12-13).
- 2) He had the responsibility as a father to see to it that his boys were stopped (Deut. 21:18-23).
- 3) He had the responsibility as a judge to see to it that his boys were stopped.

So Eli was not following the word of God as a leader. What he should have done was warn his sons that if they did not stop their evil at the Temple he would haul them before the elders and they would be stoned. But he did not do this. After all, they were his children and even though he didn't like it, he was not strong enough to take this stand.

Most people think like Eli. They think their children are more important than the Word of God. They are wrong. It is the parent's responsibility to take the Word of God and warn the children with it. Sometimes a stand must be taken and children need to be disciplined. This concept is foreign to so many, but it is true to the Word of God.

Verse 13 is clear to point out that Eli's own sons brought God's curse on themselves. Their conduct at the Temple was detestable in the sight of God. Eli knew it and even though he talked to his boys about it, he did not put a stop to it.

In fact, God gave Samuel even more of a negative message. God says in **verse 14** that the time of grace was passed. No sacrifice could be offered that would atone for this sin.

John Woodhouse wrote: "Do you understand the horror of those words? If the gracious provision God has made for the forgiveness of sins is spurned, scorned, disdained, despised, there is nothing left but the fearful prospect of judgment." (*I Samuel*, p. 31)

Now some dispensationalist may say well this is O.T. stuff. New Testament Grace is different. To be sure there are differences between Law and Grace, but one thing is very similar and that is, you do not ever want to treat the sacrifice of Jesus Christ irreverently. The writer of Hebrews warns the same thing can happen in the N.T. age that happened to Eli's sons. If someone persists in sin and disregards or mocks the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ, it is a "terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Hebrews 10:26-31)

Matthew Henry said that sinners do vile things, and when we do not reprove them we make ourselves an accessory. We cannot control what people do, but we can condemn it.

Now there is something important to see here and that is, judgment belongs to God. It would be well for every one of us to remember this point. When it gets right down to it, we tend to feel sorry for Eli and tend not to be so harsh. The problem is, we aren't the judge, God is.

NARRATIVE PART #2 – Samuel responds to God's word. 3:15-18

This was heavy news for a teenager to receive. This is heavy news for any to receive. But God revealed this to Samuel and we see his responses:

Response #1 – He laid down in bed until morning. 3:15a

He did not react emotionally or irrationally. He did not react instantly. He quietly lay down in bed. It is often wise to not instantly or emotionally respond. There is wisdom in waiting on God.

I am sure as he lay there, he was rolling through his mind what he had just heard from God. I doubt that he dozed back off to sleep.

Response #2 – He carried out his Temple responsibilities. **3:15b**

He got up and opened the house of the LORD, which was part of his daily responsibilities. Notice he opened the “doors” which seems to suggest this was a concrete structure in some form and not just a tent.

The very next morning after having a visit from God, he is up and ministering in Shiloh. He did not get up and say, well I have had God speak to me so now I don’t need to do this kind of work anymore. He still had Temple responsibilities and he did them. He finished his job and was faithful to do what he knew he should do.

Response #3 – He was afraid to tell Eli. **3:15c**

Samuel loved Eli and did not want to hurt him. He had no desire to tell him this news. He did not even want to tell Eli what God told him. Samuel was loyal to Eli to the end. Never once did he try to undermine or usurp Eli’s authority. He did not want to tell Eli what God had said.

In fact, he probably would not have said anything except Eli asked him what God had told him (**3:16-17**). It must have been shortly after Samuel opened the doors to the Temple that Eli called him.

Notice in **verse 16** that Eli calls Samuel “my son.” In fact, Eli had to pull it out of Samuel. He said “Please do not hide” what God told you. He actually warned Samuel not to hide anything from him.

Now Eli probably had an idea of what God had said because “a man of God” had come to Eli and basically told him the same thing He told Samuel (2:27-32). But Eli pressed Samuel and wanted to know what God told him.

The best minister you will ever have will be one who will tell you the truth and tell you the whole counsel of God. The best friends you will ever have are those who will tell you the truth of God and not hide it when it is negative.

Most people think they are really doing a great work for God when they speak of grace and forgiveness and heaven. The truth is people also need to hear the negative about hell.

So Samuel’s first assignment was to accurately report a negative message to Eli that was specifically aimed at him.

NARRATIVE PART #3 – Samuel develops and his reputation spreads as a prophet. **3:19-21**

We learn some interesting facts about Samuel:

Fact #1 – Samuel grew. **3:19a**

Samuel is growing physically and spiritually. He is also growing emotionally. Someone who proclaims the word of God cannot get caught up with the emotional. Sometimes you have to communicate the truth when you don't feel like doing it.

Fact #2 – God was with Samuel. **3:19b**

This is describing the supernatural presence of God in Samuel's life that is using him at a very unusual level. The greatest thing of all is to have the Lord with you, developing you and using you. This is the story of Samuel's entire life. God had been with Samuel all the way through his life. He sovereignly let him be conceived; He sovereignly oversaw His development; and He sovereignly was making him a prophet.

Fact #3 – God honored Samuel's words. **3:19c**

What this means is that everything Samuel said was trustworthy and reliable. Samuel was successful and God blessed his word because it was God's word.

Fact #4 – All Israel knew that Samuel was a prophet. **3:20**

The chapter began by discussing the "boy Samuel." The chapter ends with him confirmed as a "prophet of God." Dan was the tribe located in the far north of the Promised Land and Beersheba was in the south of the Promised Land. God saw to it that Samuel's reputation spread among the people of God. Everyone knew that Samuel was a prophet of God.

When God's hand is on someone, they don't have to go around telling people. God will see to it that the reputation will spread.

Fact #5 – God appeared to Samuel again at Shiloh. **3:21**

For the first time since the days of Moses, Israel had an official and national prophet. These appearances of God to Samuel revealed more and more of God's word.

This is important, because this all happened at a time when the word of God was rare (I Sam. 3:3). Israel had not had any one who knew God and His word for a long, long time.

PRACTICAL LESSONS:

- 1) When we know the word and communicate it accurately, we are rare regardless of age.**
- 2) One who communicates God's word must communicate the positive and negative.**
- 3) God does give people up so that they cannot be saved in both the O.T. and the N.T.**