**Faithful Regardless**

A study of 1st Samuel – Speak Lord, Your Servant is Listening

We are studying 1st Samuel because it is filled with wonderful relatable narratives during a time when the people of God were in transition from the rule by Judges to the rule by Kings and struggling to know what it is to stay faithful to God in these times, (similar to the times we live.)

We will look at the importance and rewards of staying,

*Faithful to God Regardless of Circumstances****.***

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***Rembrandt - David***

But why, in these modern times, perhaps even last days, would we be studying an Old Testament book of stories of people who lived 3000 years ago, and not another epistle, end-times prophecy or an apocalyptic book?

Because the word of God is as applicable today, as it was when it was first written.

Also the New Testament exhorts us to read and learn from the Old testament.

**Romans 15:4** “Such things were written in the Scriptures long ago to teach us. And the Scriptures give us hope and encouragement as we wait patiently for God’s promises to be fulfilled.”

Samuel lived at the end of the period of the judges (1100BC) and ushered in the period of kingship. He was Israel’s last judge and first prophet, after Moses. He functioned as a priest and was a great man of faith, used mightily by God in establishing the Kingdom of Israel.

**In the first two chapters we met;**

*Elkanah - Samuel’s father and husband of Hannah*

*Hannah – Initially Barren wife (“Favor – Grace”)*

*Eli – Priest at the Tabernacle (“My God”)*

*Samuel – (Shmuel) Boy who grows to become both Judge and Prophet of Israel (“God has heard”)*

*Hophni and Phinehas – The sons of Eli, who were also priests, but were very wicked.*

### **1st Samuel 3 “The Lord Calls Samuel”**

**3**The boy Samuel ministered before the Lord under Eli. In those days the word of the Lord was ***rare;*** there were not many visions.

**2**One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. **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. **4**Then the Lord called Samuel.

Samuel answered, “Here I am.”

*< pause> [“Hineni”] (same as "Here am I. Send me!" - Isa. 6:8)*

**5**And he ran to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.”

But Eli said, “I did not call; go back and lie down.” So he went and lay down.

**6**Again the Lord called, “Samuel!” And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.”

“My son,” Eli said, “I did not call; go back and lie down.”

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

**8**A third time the Lord called, “Samuel!” And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.”

Then Eli realized that the Lord was calling the boy. **9**So Eli told Samuel, “Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, ‘*Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening*.’” So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

**10**The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, “Samuel! Samuel!”

Then Samuel said, **“Speak, for your servant is listening.”**

*< Pause >*

**11**And the Lord said to Samuel:

“See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears about it tingle. **12**At that time I will carry out against Eli everything I spoke against his family—from beginning to end. **13**For I told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons blasphemed God, and he failed to restrain them. **14**Therefore I swore to the house of Eli, ‘The guilt of Eli’s house will never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering.’”

**15**Samuel lay down until morning and then opened the doors of the house of the Lord. He was afraid to tell Eli the vision, **16**but Eli called him and said, “Samuel, my son.”

Samuel answered, “*Here I am*.”

**17**“What was it he said to you?” Eli asked. “Do not hide it from me. May God deal with you, be it ever so severely, if you hide from me anything he told you.”

**18**So Samuel told him everything, hiding nothing from him. Then Eli said, “He is the Lord; let him do what is good in his eyes.”

**19**The Lord was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of Samuel’s words fall to the ground. **20**And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the Lord. **21**The Lord continued to appear at Shiloh, and there he revealed himself to Samuel through his word.”

***Faithful Regardless***

Samuel was faithful to God, regardless of the surrounding circumstances;

1. He was faithful to God, even though his immediate influences were NOT. (Eli’s sons).
2. He was faithful to God regardless of his lack of training and preparation. (**7**Now Samuel *did not yet know the Lord*: The *word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him*.)
3. He was faithful to God regardless of the difficulty of the task at hand. (revealing the harsh judgment that God will execute upon Eli’s household)

Because of Samuel’s faithfulness AND willingness, God blessed his life, the people respected him, and the Lord revealed himself to Samuel through his word.

But let’s take a closer look at what he was up against;

1. He was faithful to God, even though his immediate influences were NOT. (Eli’s sons).

Eli’s sons were really really bad.

They were priests at the Tabernacle and served alongside their father, but their father let them get away with some really bad stuff.

**1st Samuel 2:12-14,17,22“**Eli’s sons were scoundrels; they had no regard for the Lord. **13**Now it was the practice of the priests that, whenever any of the people offered a sacrifice, the priest’s servant would come with a three-pronged fork in his hand while the meat was being boiled **14**and would plunge the fork into the pan or kettle or caldron or pot. Whatever the fork brought up the priest would take for himself. This is how they treated all the Israelites who came to Shiloh.

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**17**This sin of the young men was very great in the Lord’s sight, for theywere treating the Lord’s offering with contempt.

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**22**Now Eli, who was very old, heard about everything his sons were doing to all Israel and how they slept with the women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting.“

These guys were atrocious. These are the ones you had to go through to bring your sacrifice to the Lord at the tabernacle.  Innocent families (including Elkanah and his family) would come to Shiloh to bring their carefully prepared sacrifices to the Lord, and when they got there Hophni and Phinehas would steal the sacrifices and abuse the women. Samuel grew up with these guys along with their father as his mentors, examples, and influences, yet he stayed pure in his service to the Lord and Faithful Regardless.

 How can we stay faithful to the Lord, despite terrible influences all around us?

1. He was faithful to God regardless of his lack of training and preparation.

(**7**Now Samuel *did not yet know the Lord*: The *word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him*.)

“Knowing the Lord” in those days, meant having the experience of Him speaking to you, and receiving the Word of the Lord directly from him. This was especially true of Prophets and Priests. Samuel in his early days, was neither of those he was just a boy, yet he still stayed faithful to what he knew of God and was being taught by Eli.

If we wait until we feel like we’ve mastered theology and memorized copious amounts of scripture before we take our calling and devotion to the Lord seriously, that day may never come. Samuel shows us that we need to pursue His calling for our lives “*right away*” and not wait until we feel “*qualified”. [“God doesn’t call the qualified, He qualifies the called”]*

In fact, when Samuel was selecting David to be king in chapter 16, David was the least likely of the brothers to be anointed, however Samuel heard directly from God that David was the one;

**1st Samuel 16:7** “The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”

We all have the same access to the Holy Spirit and the same access to the Word of God. None of us have any excuse to claim we are not worthy to do the things God asks us to do. In fact, humility and willingness are two necessary ingredients that do not come from experience, and extensive study. Samuel had this in abundance, and God used him mightily as a result.

1. He was faithful to God, regardless of the difficulty of the task at hand.

(revealing the harsh judgment that God will execute upon Eli’s household).

Eli was a High Priest. He was in charge of a very important responsibility, *overseeing the Tabernacle* which contained the *Ark of the Covenant*. The Ark was a gold-covered wooden chest containing the two stone tablets of the Ten Commandments, Aaron's rod, and a gold pot of manna.

With this extremely high level of responsibility, came an extremely high level of accountability, that when he abused his position, he was met with severe consequences.

The sins committed by Hophni and Phinehas, and the fact that Eli ignored these sins, was met with harsh punishment from the Lord. The first message that Samuel was asked to give as a new prophet, was not some wonderful news, or a prophecy of blessing, it was a stern judgment against Eli and his family.

Samuel woke up that day with the task of telling Eli, his mentor, teacher, and caretaker that “*he would be cut off from the tabernacle and replaced by a new priest, and all your relatives will die at a young age.”*

*He was faithful to deliver the Word of the Lord regardless of the challenges he faced:*

Samuel’s reward: *(final verses)*

1. **19**The Lord was with Samuel as he grew up,
2. he let none of Samuel’s words fall to the ground.
3. **20** all Israel recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the Lord.
4. **21**The Lord continued to reveal himself to Samuel through his word.

It all started from a simple, humble word of prayer to the Lord:

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

What if we were to humble our hearts, release our agendas, clear our preconceptions, and simply and humbly say to the Lord:

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

I believe that God wants to speak to our hearts.

The problem is that sometimes we prefer to tell the Lord what to do;

*Almost like:* **“Listen, for your servant is speaking.”**

We have a tendency to tell the Lord what we want him to do for us, and often we tell Him “how”, “when” we want Him to do it.

Demanding that the Lord respond to our commands.

Directing Him to follow our instructions

and sometimes even dictating to Him our agenda by quoting scripture;

“Holy Spirit go to this city and do this!,

God execute your judgment on these people now!,

Lord give us the blessing that you promised would be ours!

You said in your word (example, Psalm 2:9)

“Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession.”

We demand this now O Lord!” ***: )***

What if we followed the simple humble example of:

**Samuel;** **“Speak, for your servant is listening.”**

or

**Isaiah;** "Here am I. Send me!" (Isa. 6:8)

or

**Jesus;** “not my will, but yours be done.” (Luke 22:42)

But let’s start with Samuel’s simple prayer.

If you feel that you’ve lacked direction from God. Or need to know what He wants of you in these times.

If you feel that its sometimes difficult to discern the voice of the Lord in the midst of the “cacophony” of other voices and messages in the world.

Take time today, and this week to simply quiet your heart, put off all distractions, and come before the Lord and say;

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

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

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

***Then, watch, wait, and listen, to what He says to you.***

**I believe He wants to speak to each of us, perhaps He is just waiting for us to ask Him to do so…, *so let’s ask Him…***

*(optional)* ***Hab. 2:1*** *“I will stand my watch And set myself on the rampart, And watch to see what He will say to me, And what I will answer when I am corrected.”*