

“HERE I AM!”

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A SERMON

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“The LORD called Samuel, and he answered, Here I am!”
1 Samuel 3:4.

SAMUEL was a model child. He was the son of a prayerful mother. Hannah is one of the most notable pietists mentioned in the Scriptures. She possessed a truly original mind, but she was yet more famous for her piety—a woman who knew how to take her griefs to the Mercy Seat and cast them upon her God. So Samuel came of good stock but, “that which is born of the flesh is flesh,” and he would have been none the better for his godly parentage unless the Spirit of God had early in life renewed his heart. May our dear children all grow up as Samuel did. And that they may do so, may they in their early life be such children as Samuel was!

It is to be noticed how obedient Samuel was to his guardian who stood to him in the place of a parent. We do not read of any disobedience or discourtesy to Eli. On the contrary, we see that the greatest respect and attention were paid by the child to the aged man who had the care of him. There is nothing in a child more beautiful than obedience—and a young Christian should be careful to keep his proper place—and the more he knows what his privileges are in being a child of God, the better should he fulfill his duty as a child at home.

The child Samuel was consecrated to God from his earliest days. His mother gave him to the Lord and He, Himself, confirmed the consecration. Happy is the child who is God’s child and who can say as truly as Paul said, “For to me to live is Christ.” Such Grace is seen even in children—may it be seen in all the children of all the families connected with this Church!

Samuel also had the great privilege of growing up amid holy services. He saw the daily sacrifices offered in the sanctuary and he was probably not absent from any of the means of Grace of that day. Parents do their children grievous wrong when they do not allow them to go with them to the House of Prayer. I have noticed, when the showers are falling, that you who try to keep a few pots of flowers in this smoky London, set them out to get the benefit of the rain. And you not only put out the large plants, but you put out the little ones, too, so that the precious drops may fall on them. Let your little children, like the little pots of flowers, be put under the gracious showers of the sanctuary and who knows how largely God may bless them? If children cannot understand all that is said, I think that where the preaching is what it should be, even a small child will remember something and perhaps understand it better, by-and-by.

Further, Samuel was a child who was not merely given up to God and brought up in God’s House, but he was doing God’s work. He could not offer sacrifices, but he could trim the lamps. He could not speak like Eli, but he could open the doors of the Lord’s House and it was as necessary that somebody should open the doors as that somebody else should be inside when the doors were opened—ready to attend to the more important parts of the solemn service. Happy, happy child, whose earliest work is work for God, whose earliest hearing is hearing the voice of God, whose earliest breath is spent in the praise of God! God grant, of His infinite mercy, that our children may be such children, and He shall have the praise!

I am going to apply Samuel’s little speech, “Here I am,” specially to grown-up people, yet I am not going to exclude children from the application. When God called Samuel, he answered, “Here I am!” Now, first, *what did this show?* And secondly, *what did it foretell?*

I. I must devote the greater part of the time to the question, WHAT DID SAMUEL’S ANSWER, “HERE I AM,” SHOW?

It showed, first, a *hearing ear*. God spoke and Samuel heard. Have you a hearing ear, dear Brother? Be grateful if you have, for all men have not that blessing. There are some who have an itching ear—and they come to a place of worship not to hear profit, but merely to judge, to criticize, to find fault, to draw comparisons between one speaker and another. If that is the case with you, dear Friend, may the Lord cure your ears of itching and open them to the Truth of God, for they are stopped up! John Bunyan speaks of Ear-Gate being stopped up with filth, and it is often so. Men cannot hear the voice of God because there is sin in the way—some darling sin—and they are not wise enough to realize that what they hear will be the means either of saving them or of damning them. Hearing true Gospel sermons is one of the most solemn occupations in which intelligent beings can be employed. Hearing ears are by no means common things—happy are you who have them.

Samuel was asleep, yet he heard God’s voice. I know some people who are awake, yet who have not heard it. They have been sitting here with their eyes wide open, yet they have seen nothing of the Truth—and with their ears open, too, yet the voice of God has never penetrated the secret chambers of their souls. How long some of you have been hearers only, and therefore not true hearers! How long have the ears of your heart been dull of hearing! You have heard my voice, but you have not heard God’s voice. You have heard the voice of earnest teachers and preachers, but as yet the voice of God has not reached your heart.

In Samuel’s case, it was the first thing that God had spoken to him, yet he heard Him, but in your case, God has spoken to you many times, yet you have not heard His voice once. How many times has God spoken to some of you? Can you calculate how many Gospel sermons you have heard? I heard someone say, the other day, as she opened her Bible and looked at the texts which she had marked from which she had heard me preach these many years, “What a responsibility to have heard so many sermons from such texts as these!” And she said more which it is not for me to repeat, but I felt, “Yes, there is truth in that.” If God has sent us to preach His Word, you may depend upon it that He will resent it if you do not hear the message that He sends to you through us. It will not merely be a rejection of the ambassador of Christ, but a rejection of the King who sent him to you! Therefore, I pray that God may give to each one of you a hearing ear.

I expect that the voice of God to Samuel was only a faint call. It was in the night watches and I suppose that the Lord spoke softly, “Samuel, Samuel.” Yet Samuel heard at once. But the voice of God to some of you has been a loud one. He has spoken to you not only in loving exhortations, but with the voice of threats. You have had Christ set before you in the gentleness of His love, but you have also seen Him in the terror of His vengeance. You have heard concerning the wrath to come, the Pit without a bottom and the fire that never shall be quenched. I can say, with Paul, that “I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.” I have not kept back anything from you, however terrible His Truth was. These lips have never sought to make the penalty of sin appear lighter than Scripture makes it, nor to pare down the dread solemnities of eternity to please this evil generation. No, we have let Sinai speak with its pealing thunders as well as Calvary with its gentle wooing and yet, alas, there are still some here who have not heard God’s voice so as to heed it!

God has spoken to you through your conscience. He has made you shake in your beds and tremble as you walked about the streets. He has spoken to you through that dear child who once nestled in your bosom, but who was called away to Heaven. He has spoken through that beloved friend with whom you took sweet counsel, who was suddenly smitten with a death sickness and taken away from you. It might have been yourself—that funeral might have been your own—and then where would your soul have been? God has spoken to you by the fever that laid you low, the effects of which are still upon you. He has spoken to you through that “accident” from which you only escaped, as it were, by the skin of your teeth! Again and again has God spoken to you so that both your ears have tingled, but there it ended! The avenue from your ears to your heart has still been blocked up by the devil and his angels—and by your sin. And as yet you have not answered the Divine call and said, “Here I am!” If you were deaf, you might be excused for not hearing. But you have ears, yet you hear not. You could hear God’s voice if you wished to hear it, but you are not willing—your inability lies in your will—and that inability is the real obstruction. It is not so much a subject for pity as for censure, and so you will find it at the Last Great Day. But I pray that there may be many among you who, when the Gospel call is sounded, will say, “Here I am! I am a hearer of the Word and I do enjoy hearing it. It is sweet to me and I do lay hold on eternal life through hearing the voice of Jesus in the Gospel.” Pleased be the name of the Lord if you can truthfully say this!

The next thing I see in this answer of Samuel is *a responsive heart*. “The Lord called Samuel,” and he not merely heard, but sounded, and said, “Here I am!” Many of you have heard the Gospel. Be thankful if, in addition to hearing it, you have been able to give a response to it. I remember the first response that I gave to the Gospel. It threatened me with punishment for my sin—and when I was able to respond to it, I said, “I deserve that threat and I bow my head to the dust,” and, for some years the only part of the Gospel to which I could respond was that part which destroyed my self-righteousness and my carnal hopes—and made me feel that I was lost. Now, if you cannot go any further than that, thank God that you can go as far! If, when the Word that is preached to you says, “You have broken the Law of God and you must pay the penalty for your disobedience,” you say, “Here I am. I cannot complain of the justice of the sentence.” I thank God that you can go as far as that. There is something of the life of God in the soul that yields its assent and consent to the denunciations of Divine Justice.

But, Beloved, how much better it is when you can go further than this! Some of us can recollect when we went further, when the voice of God sounded over the mountains of our guilt and said, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” And we replied, “Here I am,” and we looked unto Him and were lightened and our faces were not ashamed! Christ said, “Where are you, Sinner?” And we said, “Here I am!” “Come,” He said, “to My Cross. Are you there, Sinner?” And we answered, “Here I am!” “I am looking down with love,” He said. “Look up with joy if you are there.” And we answered, “Here I am!” Oh, it was a blessed thing for us when we had come to that point where Christ would receive us, where the Gospel spoke of pardon and we accepted it! Where the Gospel spoke of simple faith and we exercised the simple faith which God had given to us! Where the Gospel spoke of putting away sin and we rejoiced to have it put away! Where the Gospel spoke of repentance and we rejoiced to have repentance and to forsake the world and to follow Jesus!

In addition to having a hearing ear and a responsive heart, it is clear that Samuel had *a teachable spirit*. When the Lord called Samuel, he said, “Here I am.” That is to say, “I am ready to hear what You have to say to me. Speak, Lord. I only want You to speak and it shall be enough for me. I am Your willing disciple, waiting to learn whatever You will teach me.” I do not know any position that is better for a Christian to occupy than that of sitting with Mary at the Master’s feet and looking up into His face, saying, “Lord, I love You and I know something of Your Truth, but have You not more of it to teach me? Lord, is there any duty which You have enjoined upon Your followers, but which I have not yet seen to be a duty? Then show it to me Lord, for here I am, waiting to know Your will. Is there a Doctrine that I have kicked against, which is, after all, Your Doctrine? Then, Lord, instruct me in it! Will it cause me to forsake my former associates if I am true to You? If it must be so, I will give it all up! Lord, here I am, waiting to learn of You.

It is the lack of this resolve that makes so many denominations in the world today. Most professors never look in the Bible to see what is right and what is wrong. Their father and mother went to a certain place of worship, so they go to it. They saw things in a certain light and their children do the same. But they never search the Scriptures to see whether these things are so or not. I am afraid there are many Christians and some ministers, too, who would be afraid to search the Scriptures lest they should learn too much from them! We should soon end all the divisions in the Church of Christ if we took this blessed Book only—no book of prayer, no book of sermons, no book of devotions and no catechism as our rule of life—nothing but this Book—and opened it, saying, “Lord, speak, for Your servant hears. Whatever You have to say to me, here I am, waiting to know and to do Your will.” I ask every Christian here whether he can honestly say that he has given up his mind to be molded by the Holy Spirit—whether, upon questions that are in dispute among men, he has really searched the Scriptures and whether he is prepared at all costs to follow the Truth of God wherever it leads him? For this is both the duty and the honor of the Christian—and in that day when the Lord shall stand upon Mount Zion, the hundred and forty and four thousand who shall be especially honored will be those who “*follow the Lamb wherever He goes*.” Notice those words, “*wherever He goes*.” Following the Lamb in little things and great things, in Doctrinal matters, in the Christian ordinances—not following man’s custom, nor any Church’s regulations, but following the Lamb “*wherever He goes*.” [See Sermons #2324, Volume 39—THE FOLLOWERS OF THE LAMB and #2456, Volume 42—THE LAMB OUR LEADER—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] God give us Grace, then, to reply to the call of Jesus, “Here I am, Lord. Do You bid me believe this Doctrine? Here I am! Do You bid me be baptized in Your name? Here I am! Do You bid me come to Your Table? Here I am! Do you bid me work for You, or suffer for You, or even die for You? Show me what You would have me do, for here I am, waiting and willing to do it.”

Now, in the fourth place, this answer of Samuel showed that *he was in the right position*. Adam was not in his right position when God called him in the Garden of Eden, but Samuel was in bed and that was where he ought to have been, for it was bedtime. So, when the Lord called Samuel, he was not ashamed to answer, “Here I am!” I wonder whether some professing Christians would be willing to say to God, “Here I am,” when they are in certain positions and conditions? They can hardly justify themselves to themselves—how, then, can they justify themselves to their Lord? I pray, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, that we may all live in such a position that whenever the Lord calls to us, we may be able to answer without shame, “Here I am!” We should never be where we would be ashamed to meet our Master. For instance, the Lord Jesus calls all His servant to come out from the world and be separate—set apart unto Him—to go outside the camp, bearing His reproach. Suppose He were to come here tonight and begin to speak to us about being separate from sinners—could each one of you answer, “Lord, here I am. By Your Grace, I have taken up my cross and come right away from everything of which You would disapprove, to the best of my knowledge. And, by Your Grace, in my life I have endeavored not to be conformed to the world, but to be transformed by the renewing of my mind”?

Further, the Lord Jesus Christ bids His children join in fellowship with one another by uniting in Christian Churches. Suppose He were to come tonight and to ask us who profess to be His, “Are you all joined together in the bonds of Christian union that I ordained for you?”—are there not some Christians here who never made a Scriptural profession of their faith and who, therefore, could not reply, “Here I am”? Where are you, then? “Oh, I am sneaking away somewhere in the background for fear anybody should find me out. I am afraid I should be jeered at if I were known to be a Christian.” O, you coward! Have you never read that solemn message of Christ, “Whoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed when He shall come in His own Glory, and in His Father’s, and of the holy angels”? When the muster roll of the visible Church is called, it is a great comfort for anyone to be able to answer, “Here I am!”

Besides that, the Lord Jesus would have His people meet together for prayer. On the next Prayer Meeting night, will each one of you be able to answer, “Here I am”? I hope so. Yet there are some of you whom I do not very often see at the Prayer Meeting. I have no fault to find with the most of you, for you love the House of God and you love to meet with the saints for prayer and praise and worship. But there are some who forsake the assembling of themselves together. A Brother prayed, recently, for those who were detained on beds of sickness and armchairs of laziness—and I am afraid there are a good many of the second sort! Do not you be one of them, but when the roll of those that meet together for prayer is read, may you be able to reply when your name is called, “Here I am!”

Christ would also have His people work for Him. When the great Captain of our salvation bids the sergeant call the roll of His soldiers, I like to hear the answer, whether it is from the pulpit, or from the Sunday school, or from the Tract Society, “Lord, here I am! Here I am! Here I am!” But what has become of that man who was so zealous five years ago? I do not hear him say, “Here I am.” No, he says, “I cannot come so far now.” Yet it is no further than it was five years ago! It is not that the distance is too far for him to walk—it is his distance from Christ that accounts for his absence. But when the roll was read just now, where was that man who used to teach in the Sunday school ten years ago? He has given up, he says, to let the young people have a turn. Yes, but he would not like the Lord to leave off blessing him and to give the young people all His Presence and Grace! Suppose the sun were to say, “I have shone long enough and I shall put out my flames”? And the air were to say, “I have supplied breath long enough”? And the sea were to say, “I have pulsed long enough as the lifeblood of the world”? And the earth were to say, “I have yielded bread long enough”? Where would we all be? When we need to receive no more, then we may say that we will do no more—but as long as we are receiving of the Grace of God, we must come into the ranks of the workers for Him and each one reply—when our name is called, “Lord, here I am.” I ask every Believer—whereabouts in Christ’s field of service are you? What are you doing for the Lord Jesus Christ? Are any of you compelled to reply that you are doing nothing for Him?

Perhaps one says, “My family requires my care.” Then give it your care—you cannot do better than serve the Lord at home. I have known fathers go on preaching who ought to have stayed at home to teach their own children. And good women who have been very busy at sewing meetings who would have been better employed at home. But I am not now speaking about those who are doing good works at home. If that is your sphere, fill it, and God bless you in it! But I am speaking to others—especially young people upon whom there is a claim for service for Christ. What are *you* doing for Jesus, my young Brother? “Nothing at present, but I have been thinking of doing something, by-and-by.” Ah, but it is

good for a man that he should bear this yoke in his youth. There is no worker for Christ like the young worker! I bless God that I was preaching the Gospel at 16 years of age! I could never have found such pleasure and ease in doing my Master’s work if I had not begun to do it early. And you Christian young people cannot serve the Master too soon. Samuel said, “Here I am,” and I want you, John, and Thomas, and William, and you, Mary, and Jane, and Elizabeth—each one to reply distinctly, “Here I am! Here I am, here I am!” Come into Christ’s Church, engage in Christ’s work and adorn the Doctrine of God your Savior in all things!

Once more, I think that Samuel’s answer implied *a submissive spirit*. He said, “Here I am,” as much as to say, “What am I to do, Lord? I am ready for any service that is appointed unto me. Here I am!” That was a grand answer of the Prophet Isaiah to the Lord’s question, “Whom shall I send?”—“Here I am; send me.” Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, are we, all of us, up to that mark in the matter of service for the Savior? Several of our Sunday schools are short of teachers, will you not say, “Here I am”? It is a very delightful Christian work and Christians ought to spring forward to fill every gap in the ranks. There are thousands of workers needed in this great city—workers to go into the lodging-houses, workers to visit poverty-stricken districts, workers to get at the rich in their drawing rooms, and workers to get at the poor in their slums. O Christians, will you not answer with alacrity, “Here we are, Lord! What department of service can we take?” Suppose the Lord were to set you, my Sister, to work among the extremely poor—would you say, “Here I am”? Suppose, my Brother, you had to go on working and everybody sneered at you—could you still say, “Here I am”? It is easy, when there is a good berth to be had in the Church, to say, “Here I am!” If there is a bishopric to be given away, you can find a self-denying minister who says, “Here I am!” But if it is only a poor living, not so readily do we get the response, “Here I am!” Yet if our hearts were in a right state, we would be willing to do anything that the Master gave us to do! If two angels were sent out of Heaven and one was to preach in this pulpit and the other to sweep a muddy crossing, they would not mind which they did. So long as God gave them their work, they would feel an equal pleasure and an equal honor in doing it whatever it might be. Are you ready to say, for service, “Here I am”?

Can each Christian here say the same with regard to suffering? Here I come to heart-searching work. If Christ wants one who can bear reproach for Him, can you say, “Here I am”? If He wants one who can suffer the loss of prosperity and become poor, can you say, “If it is for Your Glory, Lord, here I am”? And can you endure it if you do say so? If God should lay a heavy affliction upon you and rack you with pain from day to day, can you say, “Here I am”? In the dreary night-watches, I confess that I have not found it easy. I have wanted to be able to say, “Lord, here I am,” but I have caught myself saying, “I do not want to be here much longer. I want to be up preaching the Gospel again, for I do not like lying here, going without my necessary rest and feeling countless depressions of spirit and grievous pains of body.” But I know some Christians who are more used to pain who have learned to say with old Eli, “It is the Lord: let Him do what seems good to Him.” I daresay some of you remember Dr. Hamilton’s story of poor Betty who said, “The Lord said to me, ‘Betty, look after your husband and your house,’ and I did it. And then He said, ‘Betty, go and talk to your neighbors about Jesus,’ and I did that. And then He said, ‘Betty, go and lie on the bed and cough,’ and I am doing it, blessed be His holy name!” Ah, but it needs a great deal of Grace to lie and cough to God’s Glory! Yet it is being done, and the groans of sick, yet submissive saints are as musical to God’s ear as the hallelujahs of archangels!

II. Now my time has fled, so I can only give you the outline of what I was going to say in answer to my second question, WHAT DID THIS UTTERANCE OF THE CHILD SAMUEL FORETELL FOR HIM?

Why, it foretold, first, *further communications from God*. Those who answer to God’s call shall hear His voice again! If you are faithful to what you know, you shall know more! If you can truly say, “Here I am,” God will call you again and keep on calling you as long as He has messages to give you.

It foretold, secondly, *higher service for Samuel*. The little boy who, on his bed, said to God, “Here I am,” would grow up to be a Prophet who would speak God’s words so faithfully that God would not let one of his words fall to the ground. The child who promptly answers to God’s voice becomes the echo of God’s voice before long. “He that is faithful in that which is least, is also faithful in much.” He who uses one talent well shall have ten talents entrusted to him.

It foretold, next, that *Samuel would have prevalence in prayer*. God spoke and Samuel heard, so he might be sure that the Lord would, as we say, “return the compliment.” Very often God will not hear us because we will not hear Him. If He speaks and we are deaf to His voice, we must not wonder if we find Him deaf when we speak to Him! Our success in

prayer will often depend upon our obedience to the precept—you cannot have the promise torn away from the precept. That would be like cutting a living child in two.

And, lastly, I am sure that this reply of Samuel’s foretold that *he would have happier calls afterwards*. He who was called to hear a servile or menial message in the dead of night and yet said, “Here I am,” should afterwards be called to lead the Lord’s chosen people, to speak powerfully to them in Jehovah’s name and to anoint Saul to reign over them when they clamored for a king! O, dear Brother or Sister in Christ, the Lord Jesus has called and you have answered, “Here I am!” He has called for you to suffer and you have said, “Here I am!” He has called you, my Sister, to give up your husband and your children and you have yielded to His will and answered, “Here I am!” So let me tell you what He will do, by-and-by. When the pitcher is broken at the fountain and the wheel is broken at the cistern, He will say to you, “Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away.” And that message will be so welcome to you that you will gladly answer, “Lord, here I am.” Have I not seen many Christians propped up in their bed with their pillows, speaking joyously to all around and telling them that the chariot had come to bear them to their Beloved? Have I not seen them step into that chariot to be borne away to dwell at God’s right hand forever? That was their way of saying to the Lord, “Here I am!” Their bodies slumber in the dust, as yours and mine shall do before long unless the Lord shall first come—and one of these days, when we are lying beneath the sod, and the daisies are blooming above us, there will come the sound of the archangel’s trumpet! And the Lord’s voice will be in it and He will call, “Samuel! Samuel!” and you will recognize His voice, and know your own name, and you will answer, “Here I am!” And your very dust shall rise again to be re-animated in a nobler image and made like unto your Lord! Then will come the Judgment and the Great White Throne shall be set and the books shall be opened—and the King will say to those upon His right hand, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” What a joy it will be to each one of His saints then to answer, “Here I am, Lord! By Your Sovereign Grace I am at Your right hand, numbered among Your sheep and welcomed with them to Glory everlasting!”

Perhaps some of you think that only a great and eminent saint will be able, in that day, to answer, “Here I am.” But I can tell you one name that will be read out then—“Mrs. Much-Afraid,” and she will answer, “Here I am!” There will be something strange in her voice, for she never used to speak like that when she was down here. But now she speaks up as boldly as Paul himself does, “Here I am, Lord!” And Ready-to-Halt, without his crutches, will answer as bravely as any of the Apostles! And poor members of the Church who were not much noticed on earth, will each one answer, “Here I am!” And that feeble one who was always doubting, trembling, fearing, fretting and worrying—yet for all that did somehow rest in the Lord—will answer, “Here I am!” I think the music of Heaven would lose its sweetest note if there were not many a little one there to answer, “Here I am!”

If, on Christmas night, when you were gathered around the blazing fire and the big log was burning on the hearth, and you were ready to sing for joy, if, I say, somebody were to ask, “Where is the baby?” There would be but one answer, “What? Is she not here?” Mother does not know where she is, does not father know? No, he thought the little one was all right. Do not her brothers and sisters know where the little one is? Suppose someone should say, “Don’t worry yourselves about her, you be merry among yourselves.” But mother cannot be merry without her baby, and father cannot rest, and brothers and sisters cannot rejoice as long as the little one is not there to share their joy. And I can tell you that God, Himself, and Christ, Himself, and the Holy Spirit, Himself, and the holy angels and all the host of the redeemed could not be happy in Heaven if one dear child of God who had trusted in Jesus should be missing at the Last Great Day! They would stop the angelic harps to find that lost one, and empty out Heaven, and send every angel and every saint out as a scout to find this poor little lost one that cannot be lost! If you are trusting in Jesus, answer to your name now, and say to Christ, “Lord, here I am!” And then you will be able to say to Him, before the Throne, “Here I am, Lord, and here will I adore You forever and forever!” God bless you, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

1 SAMUEL 2:12-36; 3:1-18.

1 Samuel 2:12. *Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the LORD.* What a very dreadful thing it was that these sons of a man of God, the sons of God’s high priest, were not, themselves, sons of God, but sons of Belial, foul-

hearted, foul-mouthed, foul-living men, who knew not the very God at whose altar they served and in whose house they lived!

13, 14. *And the priest's custom with the people was that when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a flesh hook of three teeth in his hand; and he struck it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot and all that the flesh hook brought up, the priest took for himself. So they did in Shiloh unto all the Israelites that came there.* God had appointed a proper portion for His priests so that they who ministered at the altar might live of the altar. But these wicked men were not content with the Divine allowance, so they robbed the altars of God and showed such greed as to make the appointed sacrifices to be obnoxious to the people.

15, 16. *Also before they burnt the fat, the priest's servant came and said to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the priest; for he will not have sodden flesh of you, but raw. And if any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently and then take as much as your soul desires; then he would answer him, No; but you shall give it to me now: and if not, I will take it by force.* It is a terrible thing when God's servants are domineering and oppressive towards the people of God! They who should be the gentlest of all and the most self-denying of all must not talk as this priest's servant did, and he no doubt talked as the young men whom he served bade him talk.

17. *Therefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD: for men abhorred the offering of the LORD.* It is horrible when those who should make God great among men cause His service to be despised and abhorred. When those who should be the friends and servants of God act like His enemies, it is indeed terrible.

18-24. *But Samuel ministered before the LORD, being a child, girded with a linen ephod. Moreover his mother made him a little coat and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. And Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife, and said, The LORD give you seed of this woman for the loan which is lent to the LORD. And they went unto their own home. And the LORD visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bore three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the LORD. Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel; and how they lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And he said unto them, Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings by all this people. No, my sons; for it is not a good report that I hear: you make the LORD'S people to transgress.* That is all that the godly old man said to his wicked sons. He was far too gentle in his way of reproofing them. He was evidently afraid of his own sons—not the only man who has been in the same predicament!

25. *If one man sins against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sins against the LORD, who shall entreat for him? Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the LORD would slay them.* They had gone so far in vice and sin that the Lord did not mean to forgive them. They had transgressed so foully that He would permit them to go on in sin until they perished in it!

26-30. *And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favor both with the LORD, and also with men. And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him, Thus says the LORD, Did I plainly appear unto the house of your father, when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house? And did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be My priest, to offer upon My altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before Me? And did I give unto the house of your father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel? Why did you kick at My sacrifice and at My offering, which I have commanded in My habitation; and honor your sons above Me, to make yourselves fat with the chief of all the offerings of Israel My people? Therefore the LORD God of Israel says, I said indeed that your house, and the house of your father, should walk before Me forever.* “But I said it conditionally upon your good behavior. I installed you into the priest's office for life, and your sons might have continued in it after you if they had kept My commandments.”

30-36. *But now the LORD says, Be it far from Me; for them that honor Me I will honor, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed. Behold, the days come that I will cut off your arm, and the arm of your father's house, that there shall not be an old man in your house. And you shall see an enemy in My habitation, in all the wealth which God shall give Israel: and there shall not be an old man in your house forever. And the man of yours, whom I shall not cut off from My altar, shall be to consume your eyes, and to grieve your heart: and all the increase of your house shall die in the flower of their age. And this shall be a sign unto you that shall come upon your two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas; in one day they shall die, both of them. And I will raise Me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in My heart and in My mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before My anointed forever. And it shall*

come to pass that everyone that is left in your house shall come and crouch to him for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and shall say, Put me, I pray you, into one of the priests' offices that I may eat a piece of bread. The same sad prophecy that the Lord communicated to old Eli was also revealed in a very special manner to young Samuel.

1 Samuel 3:1-13. [Mr. Spurgeon preached two sermons on verses 9 and 10—See Sermons #586, Volume 10—THE CHILD SAMUEL’S PRAYER and #2526, Volume 43—“SPEAK, LORD”—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] *And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the Word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision. And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see; and before the lamp of God went out in the Temple of the LORD, where the Ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep; that the LORD called Samuel: and he answered, Here I am! And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here I am; for you called me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down. And the LORD called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here I am; for you did call me. And he answered, I called not, my son, lie down again. Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the Word of the LORD yet revealed unto him. And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here I am; for you did call me. And Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child. Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if He calls you, that you shall say, Speak, LORD; for Your servant hears. So Samuel went and lay down in his place. And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for Your servant hears. And the LORD said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of everyone that hears it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin I will also make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knows; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.* Take warning, fathers and mothers, by this experience of old Eli!

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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