

Sunday, 20 April 2008

1 Samuel 3: 8-18

1Sa 3:8-18 The LORD called Samuel a third time; he got up, went to Eli, and said, "You called me, and here I am." Then Eli realized that it was the LORD who was calling the boy, so he said to him, "Go back to bed; and if he calls you again, say, 'Speak, LORD, your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went back to bed. The LORD came and stood there, and called as he had before, "Samuel! Samuel!" Samuel answered, "Speak; your servant is listening." The LORD said to him, "Some day I am going to do something to the people of Israel that is so terrible that everyone who hears about it will be stunned. On that day I will carry out all my threats against Eli's family, from beginning to end. I have already told him that I am going to punish his family forever because his sons have spoken evil things against me. Eli knew they were doing this, but he did not stop them. So I solemnly declare to the family of Eli that no sacrifice or offering will ever be able to remove the consequences of this terrible sin." Samuel stayed in bed until morning; then he got up and opened the doors of the house of the LORD. He was afraid to tell Eli about the vision. Eli called him, "Samuel, my boy!" "Yes, sir," answered Samuel. "What did the LORD tell you?" Eli asked. "Don't keep anything from me. God will punish you severely if you don't tell me everything he said." So Samuel told him everything; he did not keep anything back. Eli said, "He is the LORD; he will do whatever seems best to him."

Answer to His call!

Here we find a young boy, being awakened in the very early hours of the morning by a voice calling out to him. It is suggested that the boy, Samuel, must have been about 12 years old when this happened. We find this young boy serving under Eli, the great church leader of that time. Eli was at this stage already struggling with his sight, and in need of assistance at night. Thus, we find a boy caring for Eli, a boy who is used to running whenever Eli might call at night for assistance. And now, for the third time that night, the boy is awoken by the voice calling out his name. A voice not yet known to him, and so the boy believes that it must be Eli.

We find two interesting scenarios here. The one calling is to a little boy, not really significant in the eyes of any adult, and the other is a calling to Eli, an elderly man, close to the end of his life, and in need of assistance for daily living. Neither of them would seem to be likely candidates for a calling. And yet, both of them answer the calling.

I feel sorry for Eli in this passage. He was the great spiritual leader. His sons were supposed to follow in his footsteps and take over his position after his death, but he already knew that would not happen. God had already made it clear that they would soon die, as would Eli. In the first verses of chapter 3, we read that there were very few messages from the Lord to Israel. Eli, the spiritual leader, was to make peace with the fact that the Lord was not speaking to him, and neither to his sons. At this point, he realizes that God is speaking to a child, and he finds himself placed in a position where he has the choice of, either helping this child reach his potential as a great prophet, or misleading the child into keeping quiet about what really is being said to him. But Eli does the right thing. He teaches the child how to approach the Lord and listen to His words. Then, the next day, he encourages the child to testify without fear or disbelief in the message, everything that was said to him, failing which, he may also die for not being obedient. After failing miserably with his own children, Eli is teaching this boy the right way of being obedient to God. He also listens to a message from the Lord that is not good news for Eli and his family, but which shows the boy that he should not fear when delivering bad news, but that he should be obedient in doing so, for the message is the will of God. "*He is the LORD; he will do whatever seems best to him.*" Thus, do not fear to spread the word of the Lord. It will never fail you and, if you do it, God will reward you for your obedience.

Are we obedient? We have the word of the Lord, and we have received the calling to go and tell the world, without fear of what others may think. Without looking at our own short-falls, whether being too young, like Samuel, or too old and weak like Eli – whether being cared for or even maybe in an old-age home... They remained obedient to their calling. Will You?

* Should you wish to write me, and are in need of someone who would listen and pray with you... Please do. david@davidniebuhr.com

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