The Power of Example
1 Samuel 2:12-36

Introduction

The events in the first three chapters focus on three people; Hannah a godly mother, Eli an indulgent father and Samuel the devoted son.

The contrast in this section is between the wickedness and selfishness of the sons of Eli and the faithfulness of Samuel. Bluntly it is a chapter about influence and example; the wicked example of the sons of Eli and the godly example of Samuel.

We are all people of influence. We are influencing people towards the Lord or away from the Lord. We are pointing people towards Jesus or we are leading them astray.

Paul told the Corinthian’s “Therefore I urge you to imitate me” (1 Cor. 4:16).

Later Paul told the same audience “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Cor.11:1). Edmund Burke wrote; “Example is the school of mankind, and they will learn at no other”.

James Hudson Taylor;

“We are not only to renounce evil, but to manifest the truth. We tell people the world is vain; let our lives manifest that it is so. We tell them that our home is above and that all these things are transitory. Does our dwelling look like it? O to live consistent lives”.

A new survey of 750 teens conducted by Junior Achievement and Deloitte shows that only 3 percent of teens see members of the clergy (pastor, priest, rabbi or imam) as "role models." In contrast, most teens (54%) see their parents as role models, followed by friends (13%), teachers or coaches (6%) and brother or sister (5%). About one-in-ten teens (11%) say they have no role models.

The Portrait of Sinful Sons (vv.12-21)

1 Samuel 2:12: Now the sons of Eli were corrupt; they did not know the Lord.

The sons of Eli were “corrupt” literally sons of Belial. The word “Belial” means wicked or corrupt; it is one of the names of Satan. The sons of Eli were living like sons of Satan. The expression “sons of Belial” came to mean a person who engaged in undisguised wickedness; a person who openly practiced wickedness.

The sons despised what was holy; they questioned and then acted in contempt concerning God’s instructions on how to conduct themselves regarding the sacrifices; and copied the pagan
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practices of the nations that surrounded them. The one law they were willing to obey was the
law of their own carnal appetites; to satisfy their own indulgences.

The expression “They did not know the Lord” probably means they did not have regard for the
Lord; or “never gave Him a thought” (see Chafin; p.38).

The two sins that characterized the lives of Eli’s sons were greed and sexual immorality.

1 Samuel 2:13; And the priests custom with the people was that when any man offered a
sacrifice, the priests servant would come with a three-pronged fleshhook in his hand while the
meat was boiling.

1 Samuel 2:14; Then he would thrust it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; and the priest
would take for himself all that the fleshhook brought up. So they did in Shiloh to all the Israelites
who came there.

1 Samuel 2:15; Also, before they burned the fat, the priests servant would come and say to the
man who sacrificed, Give meat for roasting to the priest, for he will not take boiled meat from
you, but raw.

1 Samuel 2:16; And if the man said to him, They should really burn the fat first; then you may
take as much as your heart desires, he would then answer him, No, but you must give it now; and
if not, I will take it by force.

The children of Israel received clear instructions in the Law what portions belonged to the priests
(see Lev. 7:28-36; 10:12-15; Deut. 18:1-5).

The two brothers disregarded the Law and took what they wanted; including the fat portions that
belonged to the Lord. They even took raw meat so they could roast it; and not have to eat boiled
meat.

According to the law of Moses, the fat portions of the offerings were to be burnt as a sacrifice to
God. The breast and right thigh were given to the priest, and the rest of the animal was cooked
and eaten by the offerer and his family. So Hophni and Phinehas sinned against the people by
taking their share and they sinned against God by demanding for themselves what had been
reserved for God alone (Chafin; p.38).

1 Samuel 2:17; Therefore the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord, for men
abhorred the offering of the Lord.
The sons of Eli abhorred the offering of the Lord.

1 Samuel 2:18; But Samuel ministered before the Lord, even as a child, wearing a linen ephod.

1 Samuel 2:19; Moreover his mother used to make him a little robe, and bring it to him year by year when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.

1 Samuel 2:20; And Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, The Lord give you descendants from this woman for the loan that was given to the Lord. Then they would go to their own home.

The Picture of Selfish Disobedience (vv.22-26)

1 Samuel 2:22; Now Eli was very old; and he heard everything his sons did to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.

The sons of Eli; Hophni and Phineas not only showed disrespect for the sacrifices on the altar; but they also had no regard for the women who served at the door of the Temple.

Instead of encouraging them in their spiritual walk; the two brothers, the two predators, sought to seduce them.

The women were not official servants, but rather volunteers who would come and serve; assisting the priests and the Levites. It may be that the women provided child-care; or to assist the adult worshippers with their children, or perhaps simply to be close to the things of God.

Failure in the ministry is nothing new.

1 Samuel 2:23; So he said to them, Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all the people.

1 Samuel 2:24; No, my sons! For it is not a good report that I hear. You make the LordS people transgress.

1 Samuel 2:25; If one man sins against another, God will judge him. But if a man sins against the Lord, who will intercede for him? Nevertheless they did not heed the voice of their father, because the Lord desired to kill them.
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The sons ignore their father’s warning.

From a human standpoint it looked like the evil sons of Eli were getting away with their evil deeds. But God was preparing judgment for them; at the same time God was preparing Samuel for the work at hand.

What does it mean the Lord desired to kill them? Does it mean they had no ability to heed the warnings and turn from their wickedness?

I don’t think so. God allowed Pharaoh’s heart to harden. In the book of Romans Paul talks about sinners who are given over to their lusts and desires; God gives them over to a reprobate mind.

1 Samuel 2:26; And the child Samuel grew in stature, and in favor both with the Lord and men.

Contrast the development of Samuel; he grows physically and spiritually, mentally and emotionally.

Did Samuel come from a perfect home? No--there was jealousy and rivalry; did the sons of Eli warp, pervert, distort, Samuel’s outlook on ministry? In spite of their bad example Samuel remained firm in the things of the Lord.

The experiences of Samuel gave meaning and direction for his life. From an early age Samuel was given responsibility in the Temple; this helped develop confidence. Samuel began to understand the world and his place in the world. Samuel had a strong sense of the presence and favor of the Lord; and Samuel prepared for a lifetime of faithful service to the true and living God.

Evey home will make the decision of whether they will be a Christ centered home or a child centered home.

The Prophecy of Severe Judgment (vv.27-36)

1 Samuel 2:27; Then a man of God came to Eli and said to him, Thus says the Lord: Did I not clearly reveal Myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt in Pharaohs house?

1 Samuel 2:28; Did I not choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be My priest, to offer upon My altar, to burn incense, and to wear an ephod before Me? And did I not give to the house of your father all the offerings of the children of Israel made by fire?
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1 Samuel 2:29; Why do you kick at My sacrifice and My offering which I have commanded in My dwelling place, and honor your sons more than Me, to make yourselves fat with the best of all the offerings of Israel My people?

1 Samuel 2:30; Therefore the Lord God of Israel says: I said indeed that your house and the house of your father would walk before Me forever. But now the Lord says: Far be it from Me; for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed.

We find here a governing principle:
Stuart Holden: “To honour God does not necessarily imply doing great things for Him. It is rather the consistently maintained attitude of the heart which refers every choice to His judgment, measures every value by His standard, and endeavors to make every incident of life contribute towards the glorifying of His name” (See 1&2 Samuel David Payne; quoted on page 21).

1 Samuel 2:31; Behold, the days are coming that I will cut off your arm and the arm of your fathers house, so that there will not be an old man in your house.

1 Samuel 2:32; And you will see an enemy in My dwelling place, despite all the good which God does for Israel. And there shall not be an old man in your house forever.

1 Samuel 2:33; But any of your men whom I do not cut off from My altar shall consume your eyes and grieve your heart. And all the descendants of your house shall die in the flower of their age.

1 Samuel 2:34; Now this shall be a sign to you that will come upon your two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas: in one day they shall die, both of them.

1 Samuel 2:35; Then I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest who shall do according to what is in My heart and in My mind. I will build him a sure house, and he shall walk before My anointed forever.
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The news isn’t all bad. God will raise up a priest who will please God’s heart and do God’s will; the immediate reference is to Zadok; but the ultimate reference is to the Lord Jesus Christ; who is a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek (See Heb. 7-8).

1 Samuel 2:36; And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left in your house will come and bow down to him for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and say, Please, put me in one of the priestly positions, that I may eat a piece of bread.

Conclusion