

## GOD CALLS SAMUEL

1 Samuel 1:1-4:1

Key Verse: 3:10

"The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, 'Samuel! Samuel!' Then Samuel said, 'Speak, for your servant is listening.'"

For the most part, 1 and 2 Samuel, except for the first part of 1 Samuel, record the stories about King Saul and David. But the name of the book is Samuel because Samuel was the most important character in Israel's history between the times of the judges and the beginning period of the kings. He was the last judge in Israel, who overcame adversities in the transitional period and who raised two kings, Saul and David. The time of the judges was chaotic, and people were distressed with no way. There was no hope. At that time, God called Samuel to be his servant to lead his people. Today we want to learn what quality was in Samuel for which God called him to be his servant.

### I. Hannah and Samuel (1:1-2:11)

**First**, the birth of Samuel. There was a certain man from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah. He had two wives; one was called Hannah and the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none. (2) Year after year this man went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to the Lord

Almighty at Shiloh, where Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, were priests of the Lord. (3) Whenever the day came to sacrifice, Hannah was greatly distressed because the Lord had closed her womb and she had no son to take with her. When Elkanah would give portions to his family members to sacrifice, he gave double portions to Hannah because he loved her. Elkanah her husband would say to her, "Hannah, don't cry. Don't I mean more to you than 10 sons?" (8) But she was not comforted by her husband's love. Rather, her husband's love made her even more sorrowful. What was worse, her rival Peninnah kept provoking her in order to irritate her until she wept and would not eat.

What did Hannah do in her time of distress? She prayed and made a vow to God. Look at verse 11. "And she made a vow, saying, 'O Lord Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head.'" As she kept on praying to the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. (12) Eli thought she was drunk. He said to her, "How long will you keep on getting drunk? Get rid of your wine." (14) Hannah replied, "I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I was pouring out my soul to the Lord. I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief." (15, 16) Eli was a shepherd of his people. But he did not know whether Hannah was praying or was drunk. On the other hand, in spite of her humanness, Hannah did not despair. She believed in God. She expressed her faith in prayer. She met God in prayer. When she prayed, God took away the grief and sorrow in her heart. God gave her faith that believes God's favor. (18) After prayer, her face was no longer downcast.

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How was her prayer answered? The last part of verse 19 says, "Elkanah lay with Hannah his wife, and the Lord remembered her." So in the course of time Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, "Because I asked the Lord for him." (20) Hannah was sure that Samuel was born in answer to her prayer. In this event, we remember Mark 11:24: "Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours." The clout of Christians is prayer.

In light of the Bible history we learn that human beings are ever-changing. When the people of Israel were struggling to obtain God's blessing, they prayed humbly. But after obtaining God's blessing, they abandoned God. As a result, his chosen people were dragged into Babylon for captivity. But Hannah was different. She kept her vow to God. Look at verses 24-28. "After he was weaned, she took the boy with her, young as he was, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the Lord at Shiloh. When they had slaughtered the bull, they brought the boy to Eli, and she said to him, 'As surely as you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the Lord. I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him. So now I give him to the Lord. For his whole life he will be given over to the Lord.' And he worshiped the Lord there."

**Second**, Hannah's prayer. (2:1-10) After dedicating her one and only son Samuel, Hannah was not sorry or obsessive. Rather, she praised God in prayer. Look at verse 1. "Then Hannah prayed and said: 'My heart rejoices in the Lord;

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in the Lord my horn is lifted high. My mouth boasts over my enemies, for I delight in your deliverance." Hannah praised God in her prayer for God's deliverance from her sorrow of barrenness as the answer to her prayers. Because of her barrenness, she could have been distressed, provoked, sorrowful, and finally fatalistic and become the prey of Satan. But she did not give in to her fate. She fought the spiritual battle against her adverse situation and turned her adverse situation into God's deep grace and fruitful victory. Thus she pleased God and became a blessing to others.

Look at verse 2. "There is no one holy like the Lord; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God." Hannah praises God, realizing that God is holy and no one else. This realization comes when we recognize God as God. God calls us and helps us in many ways. In addition, God gives us his precious promises so that we may somehow participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. (2 Pe 1:4)

Hannah praises God's sovereignty in verses 3-10. Many people are proud, self-righteous and arrogant because of their own achievements and outward appearance. But God weighs their deeds to see whether or not they fall short of the glory of God. (3) Warriors are proud because of their discipline and armaments. But God is the one who decides victory and defeat. (4) God feeds the hungry, and God gives children and takes them away. (5) God controls man's life and death. God makes a man poor or wealthy, and God gives honor and thrones to men. (8) God protects his people, but the enemies of God will be punished. (9)

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Look at verse 10. "...those who oppose the Lord will be shattered. He will thunder against them from heaven; the Lord will judge the ends of the earth.' He will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed.'" This verse summarizes God's sovereignty well. God shatters those who oppose him. And at the same time, he exalts his anointed one to save men from their sins. We learn from Hannah's prayer that God answers our prayers and delivers us, and that God is holy and wants us to be holy like him, and that our God is the Sovereign God who rules the world. When we know who God really is we can pray to God. Thank God that he has raised many little Hannahs.

### II. Eli and Samuel (2:12-4:1a)

**First**, goodminded Eli and his two wicked sons. (2:12-17; 22-36) Verse 17 says, "This sin of the young men was very great in the Lord's sight, for they were treating the Lord's offering with contempt." Officially speaking, Eli's sons were priests. But they had no regard for the Lord. (12) They were mischievous and corrupt. For example, they came to the servants of priests who were in charge of dealing with people's sacrifices and threatened them to give them only the raw and bloody meat so that they could cook it the way they liked and enjoy eating. They abused the privilege of being Eli's sons. They abused the holy sacrifices to satisfy their eating pleasure. They arrogantly intimidated servants as if they were their own servants. They spoke profane language to God's servants at random. (12-16)

Now Eli, who was very old, heard about everything his sons were doing

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to all Israel and how they slept with the women who served at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. (22) So Eli rebuked his sons' wicked deeds, "Why do you do such things? I hear from all the people about these wicked deeds of yours. No, my sons; it is not a good report that I hear spreading among the Lord's people. If a man sins against another man, God may mediate for him; but if a man sins against the Lord, who will intercede for him?" His sons, however, did not listen to their father's rebuke, for it was the Lord's will to put them to death. (23-25) Here, Eli's sin was that he did not rebuke them with God's truth to the end until they repented. He worried more about what people would think. Eli was goodminded, but he spoiled his sons because he loved his sons more than God. (2:29b) Eli's goodmindedness was good. But his compromising spirit was a bad influence to his sons and to the people. So God decided to put them to death.

A man of God told Eli, "Why do you scorn my sacrifice and offering that I prescribed for my dwelling? Why do you honor your sons more than me by fattening yourselves on the choice parts of every offering made by my people Israel? Therefore the Lord, the God of Israel, declares: 'I promised that your house and your father's house would minister before me forever.' But now the Lord declares: 'Far be it from me! Those who honor me I will honor, but those who despise me will be disdained. The time is coming when I will cut short your strength and the strength of your father's house, so that there will not be an old man in your family line.'" (29-31)

**Second**, Hannah was blessed. (18-21) Let's see first about Hannah. Each year Samuel's mother made him a little robe and took it to the little boy Samuel

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when she went up with her husband to offer the annual sacrifice. This story tells us that Hannah saw her little boy Samuel once a year. As a mother, how could she miss her one and only son during the whole year and then see him only once a year at the annual sacrifice? Humanly speaking, she could not do so. But she did so as much as she trusted in and prayed to God. She was worthy of receiving God's blessing. Hannah was not an Indian giver. She gave her one and only son to God according to her vow. In accordance with his mother's prayer, Samuel was ministering before the Lord--a boy wearing a linen ephod. (18) Hannah was truly a spiritual woman of God. Eli would bless Hannah and her husband Elkanah. And the Lord was gracious to Hannah; she conceived and gave birth to three sons and two daughters. Meanwhile, the boy Samuel grew up in the presence of the Lord. (21) How beautiful to see the life of faith of Hannah! How beautiful to see God's grace to those who love him!

**Third,** God calls Samuel. Look at 3:1. "The boy Samuel ministered before the Lord under Eli. In those days the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions." This one verse describes the situation of the times very well. In those days the boy Samuel seemed to be the only servant of God. So the author comments in verse 1a, "The boy Samuel ministered before the Lord under Eli." Also, in those days the word of the Lord was rare. The word of God is the word of life. The word of God is the word of truth. The word of God is the lamp to men's feet and light for their path. (Ps 119:105) But people rejected the word of God. They lived according to their sinful natures, riding on the trends of the world. As a result, people could not see beyond their

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noses. They only could see some bananas in their hands. They were very nearsighted and narrow-minded, promiscuous and brutal. They had no idea about God's purpose for them or about the future generations to come. At that time, the servant of God was Eli. But he was no more the lamp of God due to his lack of spirituality. But look at verse 3. "The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was." This verse tells us that God had hope. God regarded a little boy Samuel as the lamp of God.

How many times did God call Samuel? (8) God called him three times repeatedly. But Samuel had no idea that it was God who was calling him. So he would go to Eli, thinking that Eli was calling him. Then Eli realized that the Lord was calling the boy. 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. (8b,9) Look at verse 10. "The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, 'Samuel! Samuel!' Then Samuel said, 'Speak, for your servant is listening.'" This was the time when Samuel realized God's calling and responded. Then the Lord told Samuel how he was going to punish Eli and his family. (11-14) Eli's sin was that he did not love God more than his sons, and that he did not restrain his sons' wickedness with the words of truth. (13b) We wonder how God spoke such a story concerning his judgment on Eli's family to a little boy Samuel who was too young to hear such things. But from God's point of view, Samuel was not a mere boy. He was a servant of God who would take over Eli's mission and who would shepherd his people. God thought of Samuel as a coworker and as a servant of God.

How did Samuel deal with this matter? The next morning Eli asked him what he had heard from God. (17) So Samuel told him everything, hiding nothing from him. (18a) Look at verse 19. "The Lord was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of his words fall to the ground." Samuel, the future leader of God's nation, listened to God's voice very carefully. By God's help, he let none of his words fall to the ground. It is truly amazing to see Samuel's attitude toward the word of God. Usually, people listen to the words they like, but do not listen to the words they do not like. But by God's help the boy Samuel did not let any of the Lord's words fall to the ground. This was the quality for which God regarded him as the lamp of God in that generation. This was the quality for which God could use him as his servant in that chaotic generation.

Then what happened? When Samuel had the words of God in his heart, all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the Lord. (20) Also, the Lord continued to appear at Shiloh, and there he revealed himself to Samuel through his word. (21) And Samuel's word came to all Israel. (4:1)

In this part we learn Samuel's absolute attitude toward the word of God. May God raise many spiritual leaders who have an absolute attitude toward the word of God.