

Honouring God (1 Samuel 2:12-36 & Galatians 1:1-10) 17-Jun-2018

We're continuing our series on the OT book of 1 Samuel.

Please have your Bibles turned to 1 Samuel chapter 2 - we're looking at verses 12 to 36.

You can take notes on the outline in your Bibles.

Let's pray before we take a look at this passage

Recap

[PowerPoint 1-Recap]

Recap

- Hannah prays to the Lord for a son and promises to dedicate him to the Lord
- The Lord graciously answers her prayer
- Samuel is born, Samuel means "asked of God"
- After Samuel is weaned – He is presented to the Lord at Shiloh
- Then Hannah wrote a prayer/song praising God for who He is and what He does!

Intro/Honour

And who God is and what He does can be summarised quite nicely at the end of verse 30 of chapter 2 from our reading today

[PowerPoint 2-Honour]

Those who honor me I will honor, but those who despise me [who think God is not worthy of honour] will be disdained (considered unworthy of respect)

Definition of honour:

[PowerPoint 3a-Honour definition]

Regard with the highest respect

To fulfil an obligation

Keep an agreement

So God promises to honour those who honour Him

But He considers those who don't think He is worthy of honour - to be unworthy of any respect themselves

[PowerPoint 3b-Honour God]

In simple terms - respect God - and God will respect us

Don't respect God - and suffer the consequences

And that is the problem for the priest Eli and his sons in today's passage

They are not honouring or respecting God

Why should they/we honour God anyway?

Because He commands it - let's remind ourselves of the commandments

From Exodus 20:1-2

²“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

³“You shall have no other gods before me.

⁴“You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. ⁵You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

So honouring God is part and parcel of having a proper loving obedient relationship with the Lord God - YHWH

So what can we learn from this passage in 1 Samuel 2 about honouring the Lord God?

By Knowing God (1 Samuel 2:12-21)

[PowerPoint 4a-Knowing God]

V12 describes Eli's sons - Hophni and Phinehas as **scoundrels**

Literally worthless, wicked and ungodly men

Why?

Because they had **no regard for the Lord**

Literally they didn't really *know* the Lord

If you think about it

Here they are - working in the Lord's temple and they don't know the Lord

That's outrageous isn't it?

It would be like a minister or SRE teacher teaching people to follow Jesus - but not knowing or believing in Jesus themselves

It's not acceptable!

As we read on - we can see they haven't got any regard for God's laws either

The duties of the priests were to make sin sacrifices to the Lord on behalf of the people - so that the people's sins would be forgiven

And to make offerings of thanks to the Lord God

That was the primary purpose of the sacrifices - to say sorry to God - and to say thank you to God - and to satisfy God's requirements of being honoured and respected in the correct manner

Because the priests were from the tribe of Levi - one of the 12 tribes of Israel - the only tribe that did not have any land of their own - they couldn't grow crops or graze animals - the Lord had made a special provision for the Levite priests to eat a portion of the food sacrificed

After all they had to be fed somehow

So the Lord had graciously made provisions in Leviticus chapter 7

That the priests were not to eat the fat of the animal - this was to be burnt as a sweet smelling sacrifice to the Lord - but the priests were to eat the breast and the right thigh only - the rest was a sacrifice that belonged to the Lord

But as we see here in 1 Sam 2 - verses 13-16

The priests were greedy

They used 3-pronged forks to help themselves to meat whilst the meat was being boiled (v13) and they didn't wait for the fat to be burned off (v15) - and they even grabbed raw meat before it was cooked (v15)

Even when they were challenged by the person making the sacrifice that this was not the way things were supposed to be done- the priests bullied the person and took what they wanted by force anyway (v16)

So according to v17 - this was a great sin - they were treating the Lord's offering with contempt

On the face of it - we might think - what's the big deal - it's just food?

But the point is

The Priests had the greatest honour from God - in the land - they were God's servants to the people - spiritual leaders - and they had the special job - to make sure sacrifices were done properly - and so pleasing God - and so that the people were forgiven and back in a right relationship with God

The sacrifice system was primarily about satisfying God - not human beings

The priests including Eli's sons had turned the whole thing into a feasting time for themselves - and as v12 said they had no regard for the Lord

It was all about them - nothing about the Lord

They didn't know God in a personal way - they'd forgotten his word - they'd forgotten his rules and commands - they'd forgotten He is the Lord who brought their ancestors out of Egypt - and saved them

Remember what God said - I will honour those who honour me - and those who despise me - will be disdained (treated with dishonour)

In contrast - look at how young Samuel is going in v18

He is ministering before the Lord - wearing a linen ephod - a garment specially worn by the priests

And look how Samuel's family are going - in v19

They are faithfully worshipping the Lord - they faithfully come up to worship the Lord and make the annual sacrifice (despite what's going around them with the corrupt priests - they still worship the Lord properly - even if the priests don't) - and note - Hannah, Samuel's mum makes him a little robe each time she visits

And as a result of Samuel's family's honouring the Lord, as they should - Eli - blesses Elkanah and Hannah and prays that they will have more children to replace Samuel who they gave to the Lord

Remember what God said - I will honour those who honour me

And so they go home - and in v21 - the Lord blesses them with 3 sons and 2 daughters

[PowerPoint 4b-Knowing God]

The challenge for us - Are we honouring God - by really knowing Him - not knowing of Him - but really knowing Him - in a personal way as "our Lord"

Is our knowledge of God - head knowledge like Eli's sons and the other priests?

Or is our knowledge of God - heart and hand and feet knowledge - like Samuel, Elkanah and Hannah?

[PowerPoint 4c-Confess]

Do we need to confess and repent - that our knowledge of God is lacking?

Have we neglecting our quiet times?

Have we stopped praying?

Have we stopped reading our Bibles?

Have we stopped taking the Lord's commandments and teachings seriously?

(pause)

We honour God by really knowing Him

That's my first point

By Listening to/Passing on Godly Instruction (1 Samuel 2:22-26)

[PowerPoint 5a-Godly instruction]

As we read on - we see that Eli's sons are not only making a mockery of the sacrifices to the Lord

But they are sleeping with the women who serve at the entrance to the Lord's tabernacle

Now remember they are the spiritual leaders of the nation

They are supposed to be modelling to the nation - how to approach God in a reverent way - and how to live lives pleasing to God

Yet their sinful behaviour is so public - that all the people know what Eli's sons are like

And reports come back to Eli

Let's face it - he already knew what they were like - but he wasn't dealing with it

Now finally in v25 - he does try to deal with it

He tells his sons in verse 25 - that they are in the hands of God - and that God will not allow this behaviour to continue!

But Eli's sons won't listen

And in fact we discover, it's God's will to put both the sons to death?

Is this too harsh?

(pause)

No it's not!

They are the spiritual leaders of the nation

They are more accountable

People look up to the priests - and follow them as spiritual leaders

We already saw in chapter 1 - that Eli thought Hannah had turned up drunk at the tabernacle - the nation is in spiritual decline - because the priests are corrupt and wicked and leading the people astray

If God doesn't intervene - and clean up the priesthood - the nation will become more and more corrupt

Meanwhile - in v26 -

The boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favour with the Lord and with the people

What's the difference between Eli's sons and Samuel?

Eli's son didn't listen to Godly instruction - Samuel did!

[PowerPoint 5b-Listening]

Challenge for us - are we listening to Godly instruction - and acting on it - and following it?

[PowerPoint 5c-Correcting/Passing On]

In our role as a church leaders, ministry leaders, parents, grandparents, aunties, uncles, family members or friends - are we correcting ungodly behaviour and passing on Godly instruction - or is that too confronting - it may lead to an argument - or have us feeling uncomfortable

The trouble is - if we don't correct ungodly behaviour and don't pass on Godly instruction - early on (as Eli left it way too late) - it will lead to more and more people like Eli's sons

Early Godly instruction and correction is so important

Here's an illustration

If you grow tomatoes in pots – they love sunny areas. If you grow them partly in the shade – they will grow quickly with their tender branches – trying to reach the limited sunlight. Sometimes they become twisted in their attempt to get the sun and they will become too heavy to support themselves. Then when you try to fasten the twisted branches to some wooden stakes later, even if you're gentle, it's easy to break the twisted branches when you try to straighten them

Discipline must begin before character is permanently bent and twisted. Being straightened out is painful, but being left crooked will ultimately hurt even more.

Maybe we're also making the mistake of being **too busy with work or leisure** to pass on godly instruction to the next generate

Or we maybe we're making the mistake of wanting our children and grandchildren to be **happy** instead of wanting them to be **Godly**?

Just like the priests - as Christians - we a have a huge responsibility and privilege to pass on Godly instruction

You might say - Paul - I'm not a priest

And I will say yes we are - 1 Peter 2:9 says:

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

[PowerPoint 5d-Priests]

We are God's special possession and we are priests who need to pass on the wonderful news of why and how God has called us out of the darkness of sin and into His wonderful light - that's a huge responsibility and privilege - but are we taking it seriously?

(pause)

And in that role as priests - what are we modelling to our church people, our family, our friends and our community? - Are we modelling consistent Godly behaviour - or would people see us as hypocritical - like Eli's sons- where we say Godly stuff - but our behaviour is ungodly?

We honour God - by listening to and passing on Godly instruction
That's my second point today

By Putting God First (1 Samuel 27-30)

[PowerPoint 6a-God first]

Now - we've just mentioned we have a privileged position of being priests
And that's what 'the man of God' [whoever he is] in verse 27 refers to
He reminds Eli - that the priesthood of Israel - was established by God as a special job - originally given to the first high priest, Aaron and the tribe of Levi - way back at the time that the Israelites were in slavery in Egypt - when God set up the building of the tabernacle and lay down the rules for sacrifices
The priesthood is a privilege - but the man of God accuses Eli of making a mockery of the sacrifices and offerings (v29) and bringing dishonour to God by

honouring his sons more than God - and fattening themselves from the best portions of the offering - which was supposed to belong to God

You see - Eli didn't want to confront his sons' behaviour - in case he lost them - he was more concerned about his sons' reaction to being corrected - than God's reaction to being put second?

I'm sure most of us have been in a position where we might have to say something to a family member or friend - about their ungodly or unchristian behaviour - but we agonise about whether we should say anything - in case we offend them - or in case they don't talk to us anymore - or in case we won't see the children or grandchildren anymore-

[PowerPoint 6b-Children/Others/Family]

What does God want us to do for children?

Proverbs 22:6 says **Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.**

What does God want us to do to those who need correction?

Ephesians 4:15 - tells us to **speak the truth in love**

What does Jesus say our priority is in Matthew 10:34-39 (MSG)?

34-37 "Don't think I've come to make life cosy. I've come to cut—make a sharp knife-cut between son and father, daughter and mother, bride and mother-in-law—cut through these cosy domestic arrangements and free you for God. Well-meaning family members can be your worst enemies.

If you prefer father or mother over me, you don't deserve me. If you prefer son or daughter over me, you don't deserve me.

38-39 "If you don't go all the way with me, through thick and thin, you don't deserve me. If your first concern is to look after yourself, you'll never find yourself. But if you forget about yourself and look to me, you'll find both yourself and me.

Eli didn't put God first

His sons became corrupt

This affected the spiritual life of the priesthood family and the spiritual life of the people

The consequences for not putting God first - were extremely serious

As we read the remainder of chapter 2 - God pronounces his judgement - to cut off Eli's family - so no one in his family will ever live to an old age - and God says that both Eli's sons will die on the same day

[PowerPoint 6c-Consequences]

The bottom line - is by not putting God first - there will be always be consequences in our lives - and those consequences might affect our children, our grandchildren - other family members and friends

[PowerPoint 6d-Leftovers]

The Challenge for us: Are we putting God first?

Do we need to confess something or someone we are putting ahead of God?

Are we giving him the best of our time, our energy, our thoughts, our actions? Or are we giving Him the leftovers?

Have we got into the habit of not putting God first - but pleasing people first because we are scared to make God first in case people won't like us anymore?

As the Apostle Paul puts it in our NT reading: Gal 1:10

¹⁰ Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.

We honour God by putting Him first - that's my final point today

Conclusion

[PowerPoint 7-Conclusion]

To sum up then

We honour God:

1. By knowing Him
2. By listening to and passing on Godly instruction
3. By putting Him first

In all of this - we have a perfect model to follow in how to honour God

Our Lord Jesus

He teaches this in Mark 12:30-31

30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength... 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

That's how we honour God

By being a servant of our Lord Jesus - and loving God and loving others

As Jesus also says:

If you love me, keep my commands. (John 14:15)

Let's pray...