

HOW SAMUEL SERVED THE LORD

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Lesson: 1 Samuel 11 (and Doctrine of Life)

You may remember some of the stories of Samuel, the greatest of all the judges. He was a special child, and he was a special grown-up, all the days of his life.

He was a special child because of what his mother promised she would do if he was born. Hannah wanted a child very badly, and she used to pray to the Lord, ever time she went up to the temple, to give her a baby. She promised one year that if she had a baby, she would give him to the Lord, to serve the Lord in His temple. Samuel was born, and he was called by that name because it means, asked of God. Hannah gave him into the charge of Eli, the priest, when he was young, and he lived in the tabernacle.

Then do you remember how it was that for a long time the Lord had not spoken to anyone? But one night when Samuel was just a boy the Lord called to him, and Samuel thought it was Eli, and ran to Eli. Eventually he found it was the Lord, and from that time on all Israel knew that the Lord had chosen Samuel to be His prophet and His judge.

Samuel started being the Lord's special servant when he was just a little boy, and he went on being the Lord's servant all of his life. His life was not an easy one. There were many troubles in Israel, for the Philistines were fighting them. Samuel was a young man when the ark of the Lord was taken by the Philistines, and all Israel was miserable because of it, but finally the Lord made them give it back. Under Samuel they fought the Philistines, and sometimes beat them, and under Samuel they finally chose a king to rule over them. If the king did what the Lord told Samuel, it was well with him; but if he did not, it was ill with him.

Samuel had hard work to do, as the judge in Israel. If anyone had a problem, anywhere in the country, they would come to the judge and ask him to solve it. Let us say that two people who live next door to each other cannot agree where the one person's land ends and the other person's land begins. Each of them thinks they should have more land than the other. Then they would come to Samuel, and each of them would tell him what he thought, and at last, Samuel would decide what was to be done, and the people had to accept it, and they paid him for his judgment and went away.

Or let us say that two people did business together, and one of them thought the other still owed him money, but the other said he didn't. Then they would come to Samuel, and he would judge who was right.

Now in many countries there were wicked judges, and these judges would not decide what was right. No. They would listen to the person who paid them the most, and they would decide for him. So a wicked man would come to a judge like this, and pay him more than the other person did, and the judge would give an evil judgment, because he wanted lots of money.

Also, a judge was a very powerful man. The soldiers and the people did what he said. Now if he was a greedy man, he could order people to pay him more than they should, and make them give up oxen and asses, in payment for his judgment. Or, if he was an angry, bad-tempered man, he could decide unwisely, and punish people who did not agree with him.

But Samuel was none of these things. Do you remember in our lesson how, when he was an old man and had judged Israel for many, many years, he called all Israel together and spoke to them? All the people in the land came together to listen to Samuel, for this was one of the last times he was going to speak to them. He said to them, "I am now an old man, and I have served you for many, many years. Now I want anyone who has found me to be an unjust judge to step forward and say so now. Is there any man in Israel whose ox I have taken, or whose ass I have taken? Is there any man I have cheated? Is there any man who can say I took money, so that I would decide in favor of wicked men? Anyone who has found me do these things, stand forth."

Do you know, that there was not one man in all Israel who could stand forth and say that Samuel had done any of these things. Isn't that wonderful? In all his many years, not once had he used his strength and his power to do wickedly, or to do something that was selfish, and that hurt anyone else. All the people were witness before Samuel and before the Lord that through the whole of his life he had been honest and truthful. Samuel then went on to tell them that they must still obey the Lord as he had, so that the Lord might help them, as He had in the days of Samuel.

So here we have a man who had great power, and he could have done many wrong things with it. He could have served himself, and been a liar and a cheat, and got away with it. But he didn't. All through the years, when things were hard, and when things were easy, he did what was right and just. He never cheated, he always told the truth. At the end of his life, thousands of men would stand before him and admit that he had never once done wrong in his judgment.

Wouldn't that be a wonderful thing to be able to say at the end of your life? Wouldn't it be wonderful to think, when you are an old person, ready to go into the spiritual world, that there was nobody of all the people you have known that you have cheated, or lied to, or deliberately hurt? That can happen to each one of you, children, if only you are as Samuel was, a man who knew from a child that he was born to serve the Lord. You are born to serve the Lord also, and you too

can use that power with honesty and with justice, so that not even once in the whole of your lives will a person be poorer because you have cheated them, and not once can a person say of you, you were dishonest with me. It would be a fine thing if that could be said of you, wouldn't it? *Amen.*