

1SAMUEL 3: 1 The child Samuel ministered to the LORD before Eli. the LORD's word was precious in those days; there was no frequent vision.

Samuel ministers to the Lord before Eli, 1Sam 3:1. He is thrice called by the Lord; who informs him of the evils which shall be brought on the house of Eli, 1Sam 3:2-15. Eli inquires of Samuel what the Lord had said, 1Sam 3:16, 1Sam 3:17. He gives a faithful reunion of the whole, which Eli receives with great submission, 1Sam 3:18. Samuel prospers; is established as a prophet in Israel; and the Lord reveals himself to him to Shiloh, 1Sam 3:19-21.

Verse 1

Samuel ministered unto the Lord - He performed minor services in the tabernacle, under the direction of Eli, such as opening the doors, etc. See 1Sam 3:15.

The word of the Lord was precious - There were but few revelations from God; and because the word was scarce, therefore it was valuable. The author of this book probably lived at a time when prophecy was frequent, See the preface.

There was no open vision - There was no public accredited prophet; one with whom the secret of the Lord was known to dwell, and to whom all might have recourse in cases of doubt or public emergency.

1SAMUEL 3: 2 At that time, when Eli was laid down in his place (now his eyes had begun to grow dim, so that he could not see),

Verse 2

Eli was laid down in his place - It is very likely that as the ark was a long time at Shiloh, they had built near to it certain apartments for the high priest and others more immediately employed about the tabernacle. In one of these, near to that of Eli, perhaps under the same roof, Samuel lay when he was called by the Lord.

1SAMUEL 3: 3 and the lamp of God hadn't yet gone out, and Samuel had laid down in the LORD's temple, where the ark of God was;

Verse 3

Ere the lamp of God went out - Before sunrise; for it is likely that the lamps were extinguished before the rising of the sun. See Exo 27:21; Lev 24:3.

1SAMUEL 3: 4 the LORD called Samuel; and he said, "Here I am."

Verse 4

The Lord called Samuel - The voice probably came from the holy place, near to which Eli and Samuel were both lying.

1SAMUEL 3: 5 He ran to Eli, and said, "Here I am; for you called me." He said, "I didn't call; lie down again." He went and lay down.

1SAMUEL 3: 6 The LORD called yet again, "Samuel!" Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am; for you called me." He answered, "I didn't call, my son; lie down again."

1SAMUEL 3: 7 Now Samuel didn't yet know the LORD, neither was the LORD's word yet revealed to him.

Verse 7

Samuel did not yet know the Lord - He had not been accustomed to receive any revelation from him. He knew and worshipped the God of Israel; but he did not know him as communicating especial revelation of His will.

1SAMUEL 3: 8 The LORD called Samuel again the third time. He arose and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am; for you called me." Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child.

1SAMUEL 3: 9 Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he calls you, that you shall say, 'Speak, the LORD; for your servant hears.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

Verse 9

Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth - This was the usual way in which the prophets spoke, when they had intimations that the Lord was about to make some especial revelation.

1SAMUEL 3: 10 The LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" Then Samuel said, "Speak; for your servant hears."

Verse 10

The Lord came, and stood - He heard the voice as if it was approaching nearer and nearer; till at last, from the sameness of the tone, he could imagine that it ceased to approach: and this is what appears to be represented under the notion of God standing and calling.

1SAMUEL 3: 11 The LORD said to Samuel, "Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of everyone who hears it shall tingle."

Verse 11

The Lord said to Samuel - He probably saw nothing, and only heard the voice; for it was not likely that any extraordinary representation could have been made to the eyes of a person so young. He heard a voice, but saw no similitude.

The ears - shall tingle - It shall be a piercing word to all Israel; it shall astound them all; and, after having heard it, it will still continue to resound in their ears.

1SAMUEL 3: 12 In that day I will perform against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from the beginning even to the end.

Verse 12

I will perform - all things which I have spoken - That is, what He had declared by the prophet, whose message is related 1Sam 2:27, etc.

When I begin, I will also make an end - I will not delay the execution of my purpose: when I begin, nothing shall deter me from bringing all my judgments to a conclusion.

1SAMUEL 3: 13 For I have told him that I will judge his house forever, for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons brought a curse on themselves, and he didn't restrain them.

Verse 13

I will judge his house for ever - I will continue to execute judgments upon it till it is destroyed.

His sons made themselves vile - See 1Sam 2:12-17, 1Sam 2:22-25.

He restrained them not - He did not use his parental and juridical authority to curb them, and prevent the disorders which they committed. See at the conclusion of the chapter, 1Sam 3:21 (note).

1SAMUEL 3: 14 Therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be removed with sacrifice nor offering forever."

Verse 14

Shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering - That is, God was determined that they should be removed by a violent death. They had committed the sin unto death; and no offering or sacrifice could prevent this. What is spoken here relates to their temporal death only.

1SAMUEL 3: 15 Samuel lay until the morning, and opened the doors of the LORD's house. Samuel feared to show Eli the vision.

Verse 15

Samuel feared to show Eli - He revered him as a father, and he feared to distress him by showing what the Lord had purposed to do. It does not appear that God had commanded Samuel to deliver this message: he, therefore, did not attempt it till adjured by Eli, 1Sam 3:17.

1SAMUEL 3: 16 Then Eli called Samuel, and said, "Samuel, my son!" He said, "Here I am."

1SAMUEL 3: 17 He said, "What is the thing that he has spoken to you? Please don't hide it from me. God do so to you, and more also, if you hide anything from me of all the things that he spoke to you."

Verse 17

God do so to thee, and more also - This was a very solemn adjuration: he suspected that God had threatened severe judgments, for he knew that his house was very criminal; and he wished to know what God had spoken. The words imply thus much: If thou do not tell me fully what God has threatened, may the same and greater curses fall on thyself.

1SAMUEL 3: 18 Samuel told him every bit, and hid nothing from him. He said, "It is the LORD. Let him do what seems good to him."

Verse 18

Samuel told him every whit - Our word whit, or wid, comes from the Anglo-Saxon, which signifies person, thing, etc.; every whit is every thing. The Hebrew **את כל הדברים** et col haddebarim, "all these words."

It is the Lord - He is Sovereign, and will do what he pleases; he is righteous, and will do nothing but what is just.

Let him do what seemeth him good - There is much of a godly submission, as well as a deep sense of his own unworthiness, found in these words. He also had sinned, so as to be punished with temporal death; but surely there is no evidence that the displeasure of the Lord against him was extended to a future state.

1SAMUEL 3: 19 Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and let none of his words fall to the ground.

Verse 19

Samuel grew - Increased to manhood.

The Lord was with him - Teaching him, and filling him with grace and holiness.

None of his words fail - Whatever prediction he uttered, God fulfilled it; and his counsels were received as coming from the Lord.

1SAMUEL 3: 20 All Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the LORD.

Verse 20

All Israel from Dan even to Beer-sheba - Through the whole extent of Palestine; Dan being at the northern, Beer-sheba at the southern extremity.

Was established to be a prophet - The word נאמן neeman, which we translate established, signifies faithful: The faithful Samuel was a prophet of the Lord.

1SAMUEL 3: 21 The LORD appeared again in Shiloh; for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the LORD's word.

Verse 21

The Lord appeared again - יהוה להראו וישף vaiyoseph Yehovah leheraoh, "And Jehovah added to appear;" that is, he continued to reveal himself to Samuel at Shiloh.

By the word of the Lord - By the spirit and word of prophecy.

In this chapter we read again of the fearful consequences of a neglected religious education. Eli's sons were wicked: their father knew the Lord; but he neither taught his children, nor restrained them by his parental authority. I have already had occasion to remark, that were a proper line of conduct pursued in the education of children, how few profligate sons and daughters, and how few broken-hearted parents should we find! The neglect of early religious education, connected with a wholesome and affectionate restraint, is the ruin of millions. Many parents, to excuse their indolence and most criminal neglect, say, "We cannot give our children grace." What do they mean by this? That God, not themselves, is the author of the irregularities and viciousness of their children. They may shudder at this imputation: but when they reflect that they have not given them right precepts, have not brought them under firm and affectionate restraint; have not showed them, by their own spirit, temper, and conduct, how they should be regulated in theirs; when either the worship of God has not been established in their houses, or they have permitted their children, on the most trifling pretenses, to absent themselves from it; when all these things are considered, they will find that, speaking after the manner of men, it would have been a very extraordinary miracle indeed if the children had been found preferring a path in which they did not see their parents conscientiously tread. Let those parents who continue to excuse themselves by saying, "We cannot give grace to our children," lay their hand on their conscience, and say whether they ever knew an instance where God withheld his grace, while they were, in humble subserviency to him, performing their duty. The real state of the case is this: parents cannot do God's work, and God will not do

theirs; but if they use the means, and train up the child in the way he should go, God will not withhold his blessing.

It is not parental fondness, nor parental authority, taken separately, that can produce this beneficial effect. A father may be as fond of his offspring as Eli, and his children be sons of Belial; he may be as authoritative as the grand Turk, and his children despise and plot rebellion against him. But let parental authority be tempered with fatherly affection; and let the rein of discipline be steadily held by this powerful but affectionate hand; and there shall the pleasure of God prosper; there will he give his blessing, even life for evermore. Many fine families have been spoiled, and many ruined, by the separate exercise of these two principles. Parental affection, when alone, infallibly degenerates into foolish fondness; and parental authority frequently degenerates into brutal tyranny when standing by itself. The first sort of parents will be loved without being respected; the second sort will be dreaded, without either respect or esteem. In the first case obedience is not exacted, and is therefore felt to be unnecessary, as offenses of great magnitude pass without punishment or reprehension: in the second case, rigid exaction renders obedience almost impossible; and the smallest delinquency is often punished with the extreme of torture, which, hardening the mind, renders duty a matter of perfect indifference.

Parents, lay these things to heart: remember Eli and his sons; remember the dismal end of both! Teach your children to fear God, use wholesome discipline, be determined, begin in time, mingle severity and mercy together in all your conduct, and earnestly pray to God to second your godly discipline with the power and grace of his Spirit.

Education is generally defined that series of means by which the human understanding is gradually enlightened, and the dispositions of the heart are corrected, formed, and brought forth, between early infancy and the period when a young person is considered as qualified to take a part in active life. Whole nations have been corrupted, enfeebled, and destroyed, through the want of proper education: through this multitudes of families have degenerated; and a countless number of individuals have come to an untimely end. Parents who neglect this, neglect the present and eternal interests of their offspring.