The Book of 1Samuel—2:22-25

"The Importance of Godly Leadership" Pt.2

(2/15/15)

As we have already said, the background for the book of 1Samuel is that it opens up during the period of the Judges.

The period of the Judges was one of the blackest periods in Israel's history.

This was a time when the leaders of Israel—both political (judges) and spiritual (priests and prophets) were extremely corrupt.

These leaders, in order to enrich themselves and satisfy every material and sexual desire they had, turned their backs on God and His laws—and as inevitably happens—the people followed their lead.

People will seldom if ever rise above the level of their leadership which is why God holds leaders to such a high standard.

If the leaders are corrupt and forsake God's laws so will the people—which is exactly what happed during the period of the Judges.

Most people forsook God's laws and the nation became a relativistic (no ultimate right or wrong), opinion driven society—where everyone started doing whatever seemed right in their own eyes.

The result was that violence, corruption and murder filled the land and became a normal part of their daily lives.

This is a pattern that has been repeated countless times throughout the history of the world.

When a people turn their backs on God and His laws the result is tyranny.

Because godless people will elect or get behind godless leaders—and when godless leaders get into power ultimately the ones that suffer are the very people that put them there.

Whether we're talking about the French Revolution or the rise of Communism around the world—the result is always the same—

Godless leaders espouse godless philosophies and agendas that they then impose on the people in the name of the greater good—which always produce atrocities.

I was recently reading some of the history surrounding the rise of Joseph Stalin to power.

Stalin grew up poor; his father was a shoemaker and his mother a laundress.

As a teenager he earned a scholarship to attend a seminary but while he was there he read Karl Marx's *Communist Manifesto* which started him down the path of the revolutionary movement against the Russian monarchy.

Stalin was eventually expelled from the seminary for his radical views and became an underground political agitator, taking part in labor demonstrations and strikes.

In that regard he was seen as a man of the people—growing up poor and now fighting for the people against those that were oppressing them.

He eventually rose through the ranks of the Communist Party and after Lenin died he became the leader of the Soviet Union.

One historian picks up the story from here,

"Starting in the late 1920s, Joseph Stalin launched a series of five-year plans intended to transform the Soviet Union from a peasant society into an industrial superpower. His development plan was centered on government control of the economy and included the forced collectivization of Soviet agriculture, in which the government took control of farms. Millions of farmers refused to cooperate with Stalin's orders and were shot or exiled as punishment. The forced collectivization also led to widespread famine across the Soviet Union that killed millions. Stalin ruled by terror and with a totalitarian grip in order to eliminate anyone who might oppose him. He expanded the powers of the secret police, encouraged citizens to spy on one another and had millions of people killed or sent to the Gulag system of forced labor camps. During the second half of the 1930s, Stalin instituted the Great Purge, a series of campaigns designed to rid the Communist Party, the military and other parts of Soviet society from those he considered a threat."

In February of 1945, Alexander Solzhenitsyn (Educator, Activist, and Author) was arrested in the Soviet Union for writing politically inconvenient truths against Joseph Stalin.

He was imprisoned for eight years, released but was eventually charged with treason and exiled from the Soviet Union after writing *The Gulag Archipelago* (ärkəˈpelə ˌgō) in 1973.

He eventually traveled to the United States and settled in a secluded area of Vermont, where he continued to write.

Why am I bringing all of this out?

I did it to show you one example of how a nation can suffer when it turns its back on God.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn wrote about what his country went through under Stalin and the reasons for it:

"Over a half century ago, while I was still a child, I recall hearing a number of old people offer the following explanation for the great disasters that had befallen Russia: 'Men have forgotten God; that's why all this has happened...'

Since then I have spent well-nigh 50 years working on the history of our revolution; in the process I have read hundreds of books, collected hundreds of personal testimonies...

But if I were asked today to formulate as concisely as possible the main cause of the ruinous revolution that swallowed up some 60 million of our people, I could not put it more accurately than to repeat: 'Men have forgotten God; that's why all this has happened.'"

And so with that as background we turn to 1Samuel where, as we have already pointed out, the main issue this book deals with is the issue of leadership.

Now up to this point, the focus has been on Elkanah and his family (1:1–2:11)—but now it will shift to Eli and his family (2:12–3:21).

And we're going to see how the Holy Spirit will be contrasting the corrupt leadership of Eli and his sons (priesthood) with the godly leadership God was raising up in the person of Samuel.

For example—Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas *"abhorred the offering of the Lord"* (2:17)—but *"Samuel ministered before the Lord"* (v. 18).

The two brothers committed evil deeds at the tabernacle and invited God's judgment—but Samuel served at the tabernacle and grew in God's favor (v. 26).

Verse 17 tells us that because of the corruption of Eli's sons, who were supposed to be the representatives of God—the people hated coming to the house of God to offer Him sacrifices (worship).

I'd like to divide this section into two main parts:

1. The Corruption of Eli's Sons in Ministry

2. The Preparation of Samuel for Ministry

I. The Corruption of Eli's Sons in Ministry

A. The practices of Eli's sons—v.12-17, 22

And so Eli's wicked sons did not know the Lord (were not saved) and four sins are charged to them in this passage—

1. *They robbed the people of their share of the peace offering, not being satisfied with just the breast and thigh (cf. Lev. 7:28–34).*

2. *They demanded meat before the fat had been offered to God, thus shirking the law.*

3. *They wanted roasted meat instead of boiled—putting their own carnal appetites first. If anyone tried to protest, they took the meat … by force.*

4. *They seduced and slept with the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. (v.22)*

B. The problem of Eli's sons—v.22-25

Let me just say up front that one of the big problems with Eli's sons—was Eli himself.

1 Samuel 2:22-25 (NKJV)
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. 23 So he said to them, "Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all the people. 24 No, my sons! For *it is* not a good report that I hear. You make the LORD'S people transgress. 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.

It seems obvious that Eli wasn't much of a godly father or spiritual leader—this is what is known as *"too little too late".*

The people of Israel were constantly telling Eli about the evil his sons were doing—and by the time he finally chides them a little (a weak reproof not a strong rebuke)—their hearts were so hardened by years of sinning against the Lord that their father's admonition fell on deaf ears.

There are many parents that are like Eli—not bad people but terrible disciplinarians.

I think the main reason for this is that they don't want their children to grow up not liking them so they opt more for the model of parenting where they try to be a friend to their children instead of someone that is going to hold them accountable to do what's right.

I tell parents—your child doesn't need another friend, they need you to be a parent.

A parent is an authority figure that is supposed to teach their children what's right and what's wrong based on what God has said—which in some instances will require loving discipline.

If you don't discipline your children when they need it you're proving that you really don't love them—

"He who spares the rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly"
Proverbs 13:24 (NKJV)

The parent that loves their children enough to lovingly discipline them when they need it is the best parent a child can have.

And a parent that doesn't because they don't want their child not to like them is looking at parenthood as a way to boost their self-esteem by making them feel good about themselves—that person is not helping their children grow into responsible, honorable and law abiding citizens.

A few years ago the Houston Police Department came up with *"Twelve rules for raising delinquent children":*

1. *Begin with infancy to give the child everything he wants. In this way he will grow up to believe the world owes him a living.*

2. *When he picks up bad words—laugh at him. This will make him think he's cute.*

3. *Never give him any spiritual training—wait until he is 21 and then let him 'decide for himself'.*

4. *Avoid the use of the word 'wrong'—it may develop a 'guilt complex'. This will condition him to believe later, when he is arrested for stealing a car, that society is against him and he is being persecuted.*

5. *Pick up everything he leaves lying around. Do everything for him so that he will be experienced in throwing all his responsibilities on others.*

6. *Let him read any printed materials he can get his hands on* (today we could add looking at the internet). *Be careful that the silverware and drinking glasses are sterilized, but let his mind feast on garbage.*

7. *Quarrel frequently in the presence of your children—in this way they won't be so shocked when the home is broken up later.*

8. *Give a child all the spending money he wants—never let him earn his own.*

9. *Satisfy his every craving for food, drink and comfort—see that every sensual desire is gratified.*

10. *Take his part against neighbors, teachers and policemen—they are all prejudiced against your child.*

11. *When he gets into real trouble apologize for yourself by saying, "I never could do anything with him."*

12. *Prepare for a life of grief—you are likely to have it.*

That seems to be how Eli raised his two sons—and in so doing he actually contributed to their demise.

One author said,
"Eli did about the worst thing a parent can do in trying to correct their children: just talk. All he did was whine about what they did wrong, but he never took the necessary actions to correct the problem. Parents would be better off to yell less, lecture less, and to take sensible action more often, letting the children see the consequences for their disobedience."

Another said this,
"It's tragic when a father—and a spiritual leader at that—loses his influence over his own family and can only wait for God's hand of judgment to fall."

When we read in v.25, *"Nevertheless they did not heed the voice of their father, because the LORD desired to kill them."*

Some people read this and feel that God was keeping Eli's sons from repenting just for the pleasure of killing them—what kind of concept of God is that?

What happened with Hophni and Phinehas was the same thing that had happened with Pharaoh when the Lord led the children of Israel out of Egypt. (Explain)

No doubt for years the Lord had tried to get a hold of the hearts of these two men—but to no avail.

They hardened their hearts and hardened their hearts until they were so hard that God's conviction could no longer penetrate—at that point all that was left for them was judgment.

In Jeremiah 7:16, God said to Jeremiah, *"Don't pray any longer for this people—there is no longer any hope for them."*

God warns people in His Word not to let their hearts become hardened to His voice of conviction—

Hebrews 3:7-9 (NKJV)
7 Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: *"Today, if you will hear His voice, 8 Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, In the day of trial in the wilderness, 9 Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, And saw My works forty years.*

The author is telling us that the offer to receive Jesus and be saved by grace is an offer that won't last forever.

That's why he makes a point to stress the urgency of receiving Jesus while you still have the opportunity—**"Today"** signifies the present time of grace—

"Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: ***'Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts…'"*** (v.7-8a)

The word **'harden'** in v.8 is a word we get our English word "sclerosis" from and it means a *"gradual hardening"* is in the medical condition known as "atherosclerosis".

When the word is used in the N.T. it often refers to the gradual hardening of a person's heart to the gospel the more they hear it but continue to reject it.

This will eventually lead to *"blasphemy against the Holy Spirit"* which Jesus said was the only unforgivable sin. (Explain)

This is such a serious thing that the writer wants to communicate to his readers the urgency of receiving the gospel right now **"<u>today</u> if you hear His voice don't harden your hearts…"**

He is saying *"Don't harden your hearts a second longer because you never know if the next time you reject the truth will be your last time—tomorrow isn't promised to anyone".*

It's the same sense of urgency that Paul communicated in his second epistle to the Corinthians—

2 Corinthians 5:20 (NKJV)
[20] Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though <u>God were pleading through</u> us: we implore *you* on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God...

2 Corinthians 6:1-2 (NKJV)
[1] We then, *as* workers together *with Him* also plead with *you* not to receive the grace of God in vain. [2] For He says: *"In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you."* <u>Behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation</u>.

One more thing and we'll move on.

Eli made a statement to his sons that we have to consider—

1 Samuel 2:23-25 (NKJV)
[23] So he said to them, "Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all the people. [24] No, my sons! For *it is* not a good report that I hear. You make the LORD'S people transgress. [25] If one man sins against another, God will judge him. <u>But if a man sins against the LORD, who will intercede for him</u>?"…

Fortunately, 1 John 2:1 answers Eli's question—

1 John 2:1 (NKJV)
[1] My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

Hebrews 7:23-25 (NKJV)
[23] Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. [24] But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. [25] Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

How is Jesus able to be our defender when the devil accuses us to God when we blow it and sin?

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NKJV)
[21] For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

This verse gives us the doctrinal foundation for our forgiveness and how Jesus can now be our Intercessor—Jesus Himself became our Substitute and died in our place.

In other words, God made Jesus to be sin for us—Jesus who knew no sin—that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

We must beware of any idea that on the cross of Calvary the Lord Jesus Christ actually became sinful in Himself—such an idea is false.

Our sins were placed on Him, but they were not in Him.

What happened is that God made Him to be a sin-offering on our behalf—and by trusting in Him by faith—His payment for sin is placed to our account and God declares us righteous too.

"What a blessed truth it is that the One who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we who knew no righteousness might become the righteousness of God in Him."

Next week we'll continue looking at this subject of the importance of Godly leadership.