

HONOR FOR HONOR

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A SERMON

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“Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.”
1 Samuel 2:30

GOD is certain, sooner or later, to recompense men according to the rule of infallible justice, and if it be so among saints, it is equally so among sinners. If we could really know the secret history of any man's life, we should be able to understand his career better than we now do. There is many a life, of which we have had to say to the Lord, “Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known,” yet, if we had known more about the man, it would have been all plain enough. If we had seen the sin that was hidden from human eyes, we would have understood the sorrow that was evident to all.

That will suffice with regard to the general principle that is enunciated in our text. If we honor God, He will honor us, and if we despise Him, we shall be lightly esteemed ourselves. Now, taking only the first clause of the text, there are two things upon which I wish to speak with great earnestness. The first is, *here is a plain duty*, namely, to honor God, and secondly, *here is a very gracious reward*, “Them that honour me I will honour.”

I. First, then, **HERE IS A PLAIN DUTY**; to honor God.

It is the natural duty of every creature to honor its Creator, and with such a glorious and blessed God as JEHOVAH is, it certainly must be incumbent upon all, who have any understanding of His existence, to render honor and homage to Him. Such is His personal grandeur, such is the perfection of His character, such is His almighty power, and such are the obligations under which we are placed to Him as our Creator, that altogether apart from spiritual things, it is, undoubtedly, the duty of every creature to honor God.

But what shall I say, beloved, of those of us who are the Lord's chosen people? Do I need to prove that we should honor our God? He is our Father, and He said long ago, “If then, I be a Father, where is mine honour?” Ordinary children are bidden to honor their father and mother, then how much more should the children of God honor their Father who is in heaven!

He has done so much for us above and beyond our creation—in our election, in our effectual calling, in our regeneration, in the blood-washing, in the daily supply of our needs, in the continual preservation of our souls from going down into the pit—that we are overwhelmed with indebtedness to Him, and the very least return that we can make to Him is to render Him all the honor that we can.

He has made Himself known to us in a way that He has not revealed Himself to the rest of His creatures. His handiwork is seen in the whole visible creation, in every star His glory shines. But He is not seen there as He is revealed to us in Christ Jesus, and alas! unrenewed men have not eyes with which they can see the resplendent glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, but He has given to us this spiritual eyesight, He has taught us much about Himself by His Spirit, and the Spirit has revealed to us even the deep things of God.

If it were possible for us not to honor Him, after all that we know of Him, what criminality would be ours! But the knowledge and the grace He has given us constrain us to honor Him, and the more we know of what He is, and of what He has done for us, the more do we feel that we must and will honor

Him. Glory be unto Thy holy name, O gracious Father, that, in our inmost spirits, we do adore, and honor, and worship Thee at this moment, and by Thy grace, we will do so till time shall be no more!

I hope you see clearly that it is your duty to honor God, so let us inquire in what way that duty comes home to each one of us. First, I think that we are to honor God *by confessing His deity in all our prayers, and praises, and indeed, at all times*. May none of us ever fall into the various heresies which some have held concerning the persons of the blessed Trinity in Unity! Of all errors, these most closely touch the very vitals of true religion.

I suppose, if any man looks long into the doctrine of the Trinity, he will be like one who gazes upon the sun, and will be apt, first, to be dazzled, and then, to be blinded by the excessive light. If a man asks that he may understand this great mystery, and refuses to believe until he does comprehend it, then he will be blinded, most assuredly.

How can you, O man, hold the sea in the hollow of your hand, and how can you see God's face and yet live? Do you marvel that your mind staggers under the load that you do try to put upon it, and that your reason begins to reel? We cannot comprehend God, but we can honor the Father by worshipping Him, and honor the Son by adoring Him, and honor the Holy Spirit by paying homage, and reverence, and glory unto Him, and never countenancing in our spirit, any error which would detract from the glory of Father, Son, or Holy Spirit, for if we do, we shall not obtain the blessing promised in our text, "Them that honour me I will honour."

God save us from believing any doctrines which cast reflections upon our Lord Jesus Christ, or upon the Divine Spirit! I am afraid that the church of Christ has never yet sufficiently honored the Spirit of God, and that, in the ministry of the present day, there is such a general ignoring of the Holy Spirit and His work that many hearers might say, as those disciples at Ephesus did, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." If that is the case, it ought to be repented of, and avoided in the future, for you may depend upon it that honoring the Triune God is absolutely essential to obtaining the blessing promised in our text, "Them that honour me I will honour."

Secondly, we can do this *by confessing the dominion of God*, and proving the reality of our confession by yielding obedience to Him. It is no use for you to say, "I honor God," and yet to continue to live contrary to His law. If we do honor Him, we shall seek to obey His commandments, and though, by reason of infirmity, we shall fall short of the perfection of obedience, we shall honor the Lord by weeping over our imperfections.

We shall not quarrel with the requirements of God's commands, but we shall ask the Holy Spirit to help us to be conformed to them. That man does not honor God, who goes picking and choosing among the divine precepts, attending to one, but not to another. He is not honoring God who does not render obedience to His will in all things—the social duties that appertain to the hearth and home, the duties that are associated with the church of God, and the duties which concern the common life of ourselves and others. It is never right to offer to God a sacrifice stained with the blood of a duty, and it is by endeavoring to be obedient to the Lord in all respects that our desire to honor Him is to be proved.

If there is anything about the Lord's will that you do not like, my dear brother, that is a point in which you are wrong. It is an indication of the true state of your soul when there is any divine precept against which you kick, and you should pray very fervently that you may overcome that sin, and be conformed to the Lord's will in all things, for unless you honor Him by seeking to render universal obedience to Him—unless, being saved by His grace, you abhor all sin and seek, by the help of the Holy Spirit, to walk in all the commandments of the Lord blameless, you have not given Him the honor which He rightly claims, and you cannot expect that He should honor you.

In the next place, seeing that we have all sinned, we must honor God *by confessing sin, and so glorifying His justice*. I believe that God is greatly glorified by a man, who is overwhelmed with a sense of his guilt, when he comes and bares his bosom to the divine inspection, acknowledging all his offenses, grieving over them, and as it were, laying his head upon the block, and saying, "Lord, if You do execute me, if You do let the axe of Your justice fall upon me to my utter destruction, I dare not

complain, for I deserve it all.” Therefore, dear friends, submit yourselves to the sentence of God, acknowledge how just it would be if He were to execute it upon you, for so you shall find favor at His hands.

I do not know what else a poor convinced sinner can do, that can be more acceptable to God, with the one exception of his coming to believe fully in Christ. So, guilty one, glorify God by making confession of your guilt. You have broken His holy law, own your offense in having broken it. Pay respect to the commands of God by confessing that you ought to have kept them. Admit the heinousness of the sin by which you have violated the will of God, for in so doing, you will be honoring the Lord.

And you, dear child of God, conscious of so many imperfections, recollect that you honor God when you lie very low before Him—when you loathe yourself—when, as in the very dust, you cry, “The Lord remember His poor unworthy child, and have pity on me!” You are thus magnifying and glorifying the holiness of God to which you feel that you have not yet attained. If you own that you are but dust and ashes in His sight, and not worthy to be regarded with favor by Him, that humility of yours is honoring and glorifying to Him.

Further, we can honor the Lord *by submitting to His teaching*. A great many people go to the Bible to find texts in it to endorse a system of divinity which they have already embraced. That is not honoring God. The right course is to get your system of divinity out of the Bible under the unerring teaching of the Holy Spirit. This is the Book that is to teach us, we are not to try to square it to our scheme, but we are to make our scheme—if we have one—embrace all that is here revealed so far as we can ascertain it.

Young man, I can speak from experience when I say that nothing will give you greater peace of mind than taking the Word of God as your only guide from the very beginning of your Christian life. It is commonly said that “the Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants,” but I scarcely know of any sect of Protestants, with one exception, of which that is true. There is something that all the others believe which cannot be found in the Bible, and they have some other book or tradition tacked on at the end of the Bible.

Sit down, my friend, and study the Book without note or comment, asking the Holy Spirit to teach you what it means, and whatever it means, do you believe it. You will not discover all that it means, there will be mistakes in you, as in your fellow Christians, but do you follow the truth, as far as you can see it, wherever it may lead you, even if following it shall cause you to stand quite alone, for in so doing, you will be honoring it, and it will honor you.

It is such a sweet thing to be able to say, “I may have been mistaken, but I have honestly sought to know the mind of God, and with earnest dependence upon the Holy Spirit I have desired to accept His teaching, and as far as I have learned it, I have followed it, regardless of the consequences of doing so, knowing that it must always be safe to follow where the Spirit leads the way.”

Act thus, young men and young women, whatever others may do. Some of them are content to follow the erroneous customs of former generations, although they are clearly contrary to the Word of God. Do not you follow their evil example, but while the wax is soft, let it take the divine impression of truth, and so may you grow up to honor God beyond all who have gone before you!

There is another way of honoring God, and that is, *by simply trusting Him at all times*. Be it ever remembered that, the greater our troubles, the greater our weakness, the greater our infirmities, the greater is our opportunity of glorifying God by the aid of His Holy Spirit. “They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep.” They see much that landsmen never see, and those who have deep experience of trial and trouble are the people who see most of the wonders of the Lord in the spiritual realm.

Dear brother, all seemed to go well with you until you trusted God, but since you did so, everything has seemed to go wrong with you. Can you trust Him now? Faith, when we are in smooth water, honors God, but faith, when we are in rough waters, will glorify Him far more. It is easy to bless His name when the barn is full, and the table loaded, but can you glorify Him now that the homestead is burned down, and the cupboard is bare? Ah, good woman, you could glorify God when your husband was in

vigorous health, and your children were all round about you, but now that he has been taken from you, and your children are following him, consumption seizing upon them one after the other, can you trust the Lord now?

And you, my brother, now that your leg is broken, or your lungs begin to fail, or the asthma comes upon you, or old age is coming to cripple you—now that your circumstances are changing, and that your friends, like the swallows in autumn, begin to forsake you, can you rejoice in the Lord, and glory in the God of your salvation now? If you can do so, it is now in your power to honor God in a very wondrous way. It is glorious to be able to say, with Job, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.” Whatever happens to you, never doubt the wisdom of God’s working, or the love of His heart, but still “rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him.” If you do this, you will honor Him, and He will in due time honor you.

I might remind you of many other ways in which we may honor and glorify God, but I will only mention one more, and that is this, *when we have not any particular trouble, we ought to honor God by great joy*. I do not mean by such joy as the worldling has in his corn and wine, but by holy joy. How few Christians speak of God as their exceeding joy! I think we do meet with cheerful Christians, nowadays, more frequently than we used to do, for we were, at one time, taught that the longer a man’s face, the greater was his grace. We do not believe in any such notion as that, yet to my mind, we seldom, if ever, attain to the standard of joy which ought to be the abiding portion of a child of God.

The elect ought to be the happiest people beneath the sky. Look at a great furnace when there is a strong blast blowing upon it, what intense heat there is there! A Christian ought to be like that furnace, glowing with intense delight, fervent love, and overflowing joy. Why should you not rejoice, beloved? Your sins are forgiven you, you are an heir of heaven, you are, it may be, within a month or two, or within a year or two, of being at God’s right hand, to go no more out forever, why should you not rejoice?

Even now, His Spirit dwells within you, His heart burns with love towards you, and He rejoices over you, why should you not rejoice? If you did rejoice more, you would honor the Lord more, and He would honor you even as He has promised. The poorest saint here can share in this great blessing simply by honoring God. The man with the least talent can honor God. The most ignorant Christian, the one who is least instructed in worldly learning, can honor God. The weakest in bodily health, the sick, the dying can all honor God, if they are His people, this plain duty is one which is possible to all the saints, by the Holy Spirit’s gracious aid. May He help each one of us to carry it out, and truly to honor God!

II. Now I turn to the second point—HERE IS A VERY GRACIOUS REWARD, “Them that honour me I will honour.”

First, *this is true in the church of God*. The sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests, but they did not honor God, and therefore God did not honor them. The people despised them, and loathed the very services of the sanctuary because of their sin, and God thrust them out of the priest’s office. I believe, my brethren—and there are many of us who either are already ministers of the Gospel, or are in course of training for that high office—I believe that, unless we, with all our hearts, honor God in our ministry, He will never honor us.

My dear brother, if you ever go in for anything else but glorifying God, you will make a failure of it. If you start with the idea of being a fine preacher, one who is able to orate in rounded periods and flowery sentences, or if it is your great ambition to gain a good position among respectable people, you will certainly come down with a crash, and great will be your fall.

But if any young man, truly called of God, says to himself, “I will glorify God, whether I live or die—whether I am poor or whether I am prosperous—whether I am the means of bringing many souls to Christ, or am, apparently, a failure in my ministry, I will, at least, preach the truth, and I will pray over it, and I will agonize in prayer for the souls of men. My teaching shall not aim at glorifying philosophical opinions or displaying my own culture and my own powers of thought, but I will, above everything else, honor God, I will honor the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, I will preach nothing

up but Christ and nothing down but sin. I shall not seek to honor the denomination to which I belong, but I will live and labor simply to honor God”—well, my brother, if that is your resolve, then the Lord will honor you.

Then, next, *this promise is true with regard to our own households*. Poor Eli, I have no doubt, wished to have honor in his own house, so he paid great deference to his wicked sons. He knew that they were doing very, very wrong, but he spoke very gently to them, just as some Christian people, whom I know, are doing in their own families. Their boys are living as badly as ever they can, but they only say, “Our sons are so high-spirited and so easily offended that we must only indirectly hint that they are doing wrong. It would never do for us to pull them up sharply, and say to them right straight out, ‘You are going headlong to hell, and we implore you to stop, for if you continue to act as you are now doing, you will be ruined forever.’”

Yes, and in many a house God is not honored by family prayer, and the boys and girls are taught to look after money as if that were the chief end of life. “You go in for business, John, and make money somehow, and do not be too particular about the means you employ in getting it. And Mary, that is a very nice young man, an excellent Christian man too, who is coming to see you, but he will not do for a husband, he has not enough money, and that is the main thing to be considered nowadays.”

The worship of Mammon, the golden calf, prevails almost everywhere. God commanded His ancient people not to offer their children to Moloch, but it is done very often now, many parents are offering their sons and daughters to Moloch—the Moloch of fashion, the Moloch of wealth, daughters are given to men without characters as long as they have a sufficient quantity of gold.

Well now, if the father or mother, instead of falling into that sin, says, “My chief concern for my dear boys and girls is that they should know the Lord. I should be glad to see them succeeding in business, or happily married to those who are in a good position, but my great longing is that they may know Christ, and be found in Him, for that is the main thing after all, and I will not tolerate in my house anything that Christ would not look upon with approbation, neither will I permit, so far as my power can go, anything that would grieve the Spirit of God,” I believe that wherever parents thus seek the honor of God, God will honor their families very wonderfully.

You will find, almost everywhere, that when a man gives everything up for God, and does not look so much for the advancement of his own family as for the good of God’s family as a whole, the Lord says to him very much what Queen Elizabeth said to one of the London merchants of her day. “I want you to go to Hamburg, to attend to some business of mine,” said the queen. “But your majesty,” said the merchant, “my own business will suffer in my absence.” “No,” said the queen, “it will not, for if you attend to my business, I will attend to yours.” And the Lord says to us that if we honor Him, He will honor us, and even in this present life He will give us a hundred fold for anything we give up for Him, and in the world to come life everlasting.

May none of you, dear friends, ever be like Eli, who had to mourn over the destruction of his sinful sons, but may you honor God in your families, for then He will also honor you there. Who is so honored as the venerable Christian man who has his sons and his grandsons around him? He is a king, every inch of him, though, perhaps, he never earned more than a day-laborer’s wages. As he lays his hands upon the heads of his children’s children, and implores his God to be their God also, I seem to see a patriarch stand before me in a grandeur which an emperor might envy. God will honor you in your family if you honor Him there.

Then again, God has a way of honoring His people *in the society around them*. You, young man, going into that warehouse, and taking a clerkship with many others, if you are consistent, true to your colors, and serve God faithfully, they will ridicule you, very likely, for a while, but if you continue to be consistent, they will soon respect you. If you honor God, God will honor you, and you will find that, in society, it is the wise and safe method to keep the Lord always before you.

Some of you, young men, who have come up to London from the country, are apt to think that, as others do not go to a place of worship on the Sabbath, you will not do as you did at your home, but I

pray you to keep up your good country custom, for your employers, and those who are about you, will think far better of you if you do so, and although this is, by itself, a low and ignoble motive, yet it has its place among the higher reasons for attending the means of grace. If you honor God, you will get honor in the eyes of those whose opinion is worthy of your regard.

Again, if we honor God, He will honor us *in the wide, wide world*, so far as our influence may reach. Look at that great crowd gathered in Smithfield. Who is that poor wretch standing in the middle? Many of those around him look upon him with the utmost scorn and derision. They have chained him up to a stake, and they are bringing dry kindling, for they are going to burn him to death.

Who is that man? People in the crowd cry out that he is a dreadful heretic, who deserves to die, but if you turn to Foxe's Book of Martyrs, you will find his name recorded there amongst the noble army who died as heroes of the cross.

Because he suffered for Christ, God has honored him, and at this present day, who among us would not rather be the martyr who was burned than the cardinal who was the means of getting him burned? Who would not rather have been numbered amongst the faithful multitudes, in the valleys of Piedmont, whose names are all unknown, than have been the Duke of Savoy, or the King of France, or the Pope of Rome, who conspired together to put them to death?

And dear friends, if God did not honor us before men at all, it would not matter much, for *those who honor Him, He honors in their own consciences*. God can honor you, even though nobody else sees that He does it, in such a way that you will be more contented with that honor than if your name and fame were blazoned forth before the whole world. The orator who addressed an audience, and found that all his hearers went away with the exception of one man, was quite content with his one auditor, for that man was Plato, and if in this world, you should so act that you should have no approbation left except the approval of God manifested to your own conscience, you might well be content.

"I, Athanasius, against the world," was a grand thing for that staunch hero of the faith to be able to say, but if God was with Athanasius, he might just as well have said, "I, Athanasius, against fifty thousand worlds," for what is the whole universe in comparison with God? "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

Honor God, my dear young friend, leaving the parental roof, and coming to London, I pray you to honor God, and even if you should not meet with the esteem which a good character ought to win for you from those by whom you are surrounded—if you should come under a cloud—if you should, after all, have to live a life of poverty and obscurity—yet the fact that you have done what is right, and that God smiles upon you with approval, and gives you peace of conscience, and quiet confidence in your soul, will be a sufficient reward for you.

I close by reminding you that *we never know, any of us, how much God is honoring us*. You did a noble deed the other day, my brother, yet no one said, "Thank you," for it. You gave all you had, poor widow—the two mites that were all your living, and nobody knew anything about it, but do you suppose that there is no fame except that which is spoken of by the breath of man? There are blessed spirits hovering all around us, multitudes of holy angels are watching the saints, and they see and approve all that is right, and I doubt not that often, there is a worthy eulogium uttered by angelic lips when they see the devotion of the saints of God—the devotion which is unseen by mortal eyes.

And last of all, there shall come a day when this earth shall be all ablaze, and amidst the terrors of that great consummation of the age, the dead shall rise, and you shall be among them, brother. Then shall the trumpet sound exceedingly loud and long, and all human beings, and the fallen spirits too, shall come to judgment, and there, amidst such a throng as never was beheld before, the despised, misrepresented, persecuted follower of the right, who honored God at all costs, shall receive, before the assembled universe, honor from the Lord of all.

Lift up your heads, O ye children of God, for your redemption draweth nigh! It is a grand day, with some men, when they receive the Victoria Cross from their sovereign's hand, or when they are elevated to the House of Lords, but it will be a far higher honor when Christ shall say to the righteous, "Come, ye

blessed of my Father; inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world,” and when He shall say to each one who has faithfully served Him, “Well done, good and faithful servant, thou have been faithful in a few things, I will make you ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

Brothers and sisters, if God has saved us, let us live as in the light of the coming day of judgment, and may the Lord have mercy upon us in that day, and honor us because first, by His grace, He enabled us to honor Him!

As for you who never think of honoring God, and never care about Him, your destruction is certain if you continue in the way in which you are now walking. If you want to know how you may be damned, it is only a little matter of neglect that will ensure it. “How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?” I fear that many of you are living in that neglect. May the Holy Spirit graciously turn you from it, and cause you to seek the Lord, and believe in Jesus, this very moment, that you too, honoring God by your confession of sin, and by believing in His Son, Jesus Christ, whom He has set forth as the one propitiation for sin, may find the promise of our text true to you also, for He will honor you even as you have honored Him.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

1 SAMUEL 2

Verses 1-3. *And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the LORD, my horn is exalted in the LORD: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation. There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God. Talk no more so exceedingly proud; let not arrogance come out of your mouth: for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.*

This is a very suggestive and forcible expression. God does not judge our actions by their appearance, but puts them into the scales of the sanctuary, and weighs them as carefully as bankers weigh gold.

4-8. *The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength. They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased: so that the barren has born seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble. The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD's, and he hath set the world upon them.*

What a clear view Hannah had of the sovereignty of God, and how plainly she perceived that God overrules all mortal things, and does as He wills! How she seemed to glory in the power of that almighty hand whose working unbelievers cannot discern, but which, to this gracious woman's opened eye, was so conspicuous everywhere!

9-12. *He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail. The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed. And Elkanah went to Ramah to his house. And the child did minister unto the LORD before Eli the priest.*

Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the LORD.

Yet they were priests, and when a man stands up to minister in holy things, and by virtue of his office is supposed to know the Lord, yet really does not, he stands, not only in a position of the utmost guilt, but also in a position in which he is never likely to get a blessing. He seems to be beyond the reach of the ordinary agencies of mercy, because he has assumed a position to which he has no right.

13-14. *And the priest's custom with the people was, that, when any man offered a sacrifice, the priest's servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a fleshhook of three teeth in his hand; and he struck it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the fleshhook brought up the priest took for himself. So they did in Shiloh unto all the Israelites that came thither.*

There was no such rule or regulation given by God, but these sons of Eli had made rules for themselves. It is always wrong to alter the regulations of the Lord's house. Even the least of them should be obeyed exactly as it stands.

15-16. *Also before they burnt the fat, the priest's servant came, and said to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the priest; for he will not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw. And if any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, and then take as much as thy soul desireth; then he would answer him, Nay; but thou shalt give it me now: and if not, I will take it by force.*

There were sacrifices in which God had His portion in the burning of the fat upon the altar, and the priest had a portion allotted to him, and the offerer himself had a portion upon which he fed, in token of his communion and fellowship with God. The priest ought to have been content with what was an ample portion for him, but the greed of these young men prostituted holy things, and defiled the house of the Lord.

17. *Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD: for men abhorred the offering of the LORD.*

They not only grieved God, but they also grieved His people so much that they ceased to come where their consciences were wounded, and where their most tender sensibilities were perpetually shocked.

18. *But Samuel ministered before the LORD, being a child, girded with a linen ephod.*

What a contrast there was between little Samuel and the sons of Eli! He was not led astray by the evil example of those who were older than himself, and to whom he would naturally look up because of their high office. This dear child escaped contamination because God's grace preserved him, and also because his mother's prayers, like a wall of fire, were round about him.

19-21. *Moreover his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.*

And Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife, and said, the LORD give thee seed of this woman for the loan which is lent to the LORD. And they went unto their own home. And the LORD visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bare three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the LORD.

She lent one child to the Lord, and she had five others given to her. God always pays good interest on all His loans. "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD." It would be well if more would see how much per cent they could get from such a loan as that.

22-25. *Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel; and how they lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And he said unto them, Why do ye do such things? for I hear of your evil dealings by all this people. Nay my sons; for it is no good report that I hear: ye make the LORD'S people to transgress. If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the LORD, who shall entreat for him?*

That is the way Eli rebuked his sons. "And very gently he did it, dear old man," says someone. Yes, but don't you imitate him, for if you do, you may also inherit the curse that came upon his house. There are other virtues in this world besides gentleness. There is sometimes needed the power to speak sternly—to rebuke with firmness and severity, and Eli had not this. He was an easy-going old soul. Ah! but when the honor of God is at stake, such action as his is out of place. It is all very well to have everybody saying, "Mr. So-and-so is such an amiable man, there is no sectarianism and no bigotry about him, he never says a word to offend anybody." Just so, but Martin Luther was not at all that kind of man, and where should we have been without such protests as his?

25. *Notwithstanding, they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the LORD would slay them.*

They had gone so far in their sin that the Lord permitted them to go further still, and to bring punishment upon themselves for their evil deeds.

26. *And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the LORD, and also with men.*

How vividly the Holy Spirit brings out the contrast between Samuel and these two wicked young men! They grew on in sin, but the child Samuel grew on in favor both with God and with men. The Lord loves to watch His lilies growing among the sharp thorns, and to see how brightly His stars are shining in the blackest night.

27-28. *And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Did I plainly appear unto the house of thy father, when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house? And did I choose him—*

That is, Aaron—

28-30. *Out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to offer upon mine altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? and did I give unto the house of thy father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel? Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation; and honourest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people? Wherefore the LORD God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me forever:*

There was a condition attached to that promise—a condition implied, if not expressly stated.

30-31. *But now the LORD saith, Be it far from me; for them that honor me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed. Behold, the days come, that I will cut off thine arm,—*

That is, “the strength of thy family shall be taken away,”—

31-33. *And the arm of thy father's house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house. And thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation, in all the wealth which God shall give Israel: and there shall not be an old man in thine house for ever. And the man of thine, whom I shall not cut off from mine altar, shall be to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart: and all the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age.*

God does not think little of sin in His ministers, and in His sanctuary. There is a difference between sin and sin. The place where it is committed may make a difference, and the office of the man who commits it may make a difference. Sin makes its culmination when the sinner is highly favored, and brought into close relationship with God by office.

34-35. *And this shall be a sign unto thee, that shall come upon thy two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas; in one day they shall die both of them. And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed for ever.*

No doubt first referring to Zadok, who succeeded afterwards to the priest's office, but looking further forward still to our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the ever-faithful High Priest who always does according to that which is in the mind and heart of the Father.

36. *And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left in thine house shall come and crouch to him for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and shall say, Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priests' offices, that I may eat a piece of bread.*

Or rather, as the margin has it, “Put me, I pray thee, into somewhat about the priesthood.” “Put me into something that has to do with the priesthood.” So the house of Eli passed from its honorable elevation into degradation and poverty. However highly favored any of us may have been, let us never presume upon that, and turn aside to sin. If we do not know the Lord, and do not honor Him in all the acts that we perform in His name, it may be that a like degradation to that of Eli's house may come upon us because we have despised the will and the words of the Most High.

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