

Honour or Horror?

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[0 : 00] Thanks very much Gary and Band. Good evening everyone, really good to have you with us this evening as we come together and continue looking at the book of 1 Samuel. I've called tonight's talk Honor or Horror, Honor or Horror.

And as we read the passage, you might look out for examples of where people honour God or are honoured by God, and also things that you find horrifying or shocking, either in what people do or in the judgment that comes on them.

So we're going to read from 1 Samuel and chapter 2 to begin with. 1 Samuel chapter 2 and we'll be reading from verse 12. 1 Samuel chapter 2 and verse 12.

And it says this, Eli's sons were scoundrels. They had no regard for the Lord. Now it was the practice of the priests that whenever any of the people offered a sacrifice, the priest's servant would come with a three-pound fork in his hand while the meat was being boiled.

And would plunge the fork into the pan or kettle or cauldron or pot. Whatever the fork brought up, the priest would take for himself. This is how they treated all the Israelites who came to Shiloh.

[1 : 11] But even before the fat was burned, the priest's servant would come and say to the people who were sacrificing, Give the priest some meat to roast. He won't accept boiled meat from you, but only raw.

If the person said to him, Let the fat be burned up first and then take whatever you want, the servant would then answer, No, hand it over now. If you don't, I'll take it by force.

The sin of the young men was very great in the Lord's sight, for they were treating the Lord's offering with contempt. But Samuel was ministering before the Lord, a boy wearing a linen ephod.

Each year his mother made him a little robe and took it to him when she went up with her husband to offer the annual sacrifice. Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, saying, May the Lord give you children by this woman to take the place of the one she prayed for and gave to the Lord.

Then they would go home. And the Lord was gracious to Hannah. She gave birth to three sons and two daughters. Meanwhile, the boy Samuel grew up in the presence of the Lord.

[2 : 23] Now Eli, who was very old, heard about everything his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they slept with the women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting. So he said to them, Why do you do such things?

I hear from all the people about these wicked deeds of yours. No, my sons, the report I hear spreading among the Lord's people is not good. If one person sins against another, God may mediate for the offender.

But if anyone sins against the Lord, who will intercede for them? His sons, however, did not listen to their father's rebuke, for it was the Lord's will to put them to death.

And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the Lord and with people. Now a man of God came to Eli and said to him, This is what the Lord says, Did I not clearly reveal myself to your ancestors' family when they were in Egypt under Pharaoh?

I chose your ancestors out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to go up to my altar, to burn incense, and to wear an ephod in my presence. I also gave your ancestors' family all the food offerings presented by the Israelites.

[3 : 40] Why do you scorn my sacrifice and offering that I prescribed for my dwelling? Why do you honor your sons more than me by fattening yourselves on the choice parts of every offering made by my people Israel?

Therefore, the Lord, the God of Israel declares, I promise that members of your family would minister before me forever. But now the Lord declares, Far be it from me.

Those who honor me I will honor, but those who despise me will be disdained. The time is coming when I will cut short your strength and the strength of your priestly house, so that no one in it will reach old age.

And you will see distress in my dwelling. Although good will be done to Israel, no one in your family line will ever reach old age. Every one of you that I do not cut off from serving at my altar, I will spare only to destroy your sight and stop your strength, and all your descendants will die in the prime of life.

And what happens to your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, will be assigned to you? They will both die on the same day. I will raise up for myself a faithful priest who will do according to what is in my heart and mind.

[5 : 00] I will firmly establish his priestly house and they will minister before my anointed one always. Then everyone left in your family line will come and bow down before him for a piece of silver and loaf of bread and plead, Appoint to me some priestly office so I can have food to eat.

I'm sure God will bless his word as we consider it together. Let's just take a second to pray together. Our Father, we thank you that this is your word, that it is therefore useful to us, whether this is in teaching, in rebuking, in helping us to understand better your ways.

I would say that you will speak to us this evening. Help us to understand what is relevant to us today and which should affect the way we live our lives as we seek to honour and glorify the Lord Jesus.

We pray that your voice will be heard, that the things which are of yourself will be remembered and that you will help us to draw closer to you as we consider your word.

We ask for your presence in the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen. There's a couple on the screen. Our Horst and Herland Kasner.

[6 : 17] Kasner was a Lutheran pastor who did something very unusual in 1954. He moved with his wife and their four-month-old daughter from West Germany to East Germany.

Now that was at a time when many people were moving in the other direction. East Germany, a very oppressive communist regime. West Germany, of course, a democracy and one which was recovering from the Second World War.

But Pastor Kasner moved with his wife and daughter to East Germany. And so the young girl grew up in that oppressive communist regime.

In a slightly unusual situation in that all around her, she could see the things that were happening and the things in many ways would be quite horrifying. And yet at the same time, she was growing up in a Christian family, in a Christian environment, and learning something of the gospel of the Lord Jesus.

Indeed, the area where they were, as well as having this house where they lived, right next door to them, there was a centre for disabled people which Christians in that area were helping with.

[7 : 30] 1989, and there was the fall of the Berlin Wall. And that young girl, that baby, when she moved to East Germany, by then obviously had grown to be a woman. She was quite a successful chemist.

And at that point, she decided she wanted to go into politics. And we know her today as perhaps the most successful female politician in the world.

It is Angela Merkel, who is the leader of the German state. And she is still very much influenced by the way in which she grew up, by the strange juxtaposition of, on the one hand, growing up in a Christian environment and being taught God's ways, and the other hand, observing around her all the evils that were associated with that communist state.

And she was very much shaped by that. For example, the way in which she received the refugees from the Middle East a few years ago, I believe was very much influenced by the way she grew up and by the things she saw and by the compassion from that, that she developed.

And she is, today she belongs to an evangelical church and she would say that she still has a strong Christian faith. And I think the story of Angela Merkel resonates as we think about 1 Samuel 2.

[8 : 50] Because here we have a situation where the state, those who are in leadership, in this case the priests, are utterly corrupt and are oppressing the people.

And yet we have a young boy who is growing up quietly in the temple and is learning God's ways and would go on to be a great leader of his nation.

I'm talking about Samuel, of course. And we have this dual thing which is what I've called the talk honour or horror. We have this dual thing going on. On the one hand, we have the horrors of what the priests are doing to the people and in disobedience to God.

And on the other hand, we have Samuel and his family who are honouring God and being honoured by him. So what we're going to do this evening, very simple, is we're going to look at three people, three groups of people.

We're going to look at Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli. We're going to look at Eli. And then we're going to look at Samuel and a little bit about his family as well. And hopefully learn some lessons from that about how we should honour God and about some of the horrors that can happen when people don't honour God, have no knowledge of him.

[10:02] So let's start with the two sons, Hophni and Phinehas. I've called this section extreme evil. I don't think that's putting it too highly. Here were two men who had no knowledge of God.

Verse 12 says, Eli's sons were scoundrels. They had no regard for the Lord. If you translate it literally, it says they didn't know God.

And both translations are probably fine. They didn't know God. They had no personal relationship with God. And they certainly had no concern for God or for obeying him.

This despite them being in positions of leadership, of religious leadership in the land, and those who the people should have been able to look up to and respect and to copy their example.

These young men had no regard for the Lord and similarly no regard for the people. Let's look briefly at what was going wrong.

[10:59] In the first place, there was religious abuse. And that's in the first part of the passage.

And this was seemed to us rather strange account of what happened to the meat for the sacrifices.

So let me just explain a little bit about what should have happened and then we'll talk about what did happen and why that was so wrong. All of the sacrifices the people brought to God, except for the burnt offering, which had to be totally burnt, part of it was devoted to God, part of it was given to the priest, and part of it was available to the person making the offering that they could enjoy part of the sacrifice themselves.

So to be specific, the fat had to be burnt off and had to be devoted to God. The priests were entitled to the breast and the right thigh, so they got two good bits of the animal for themselves because the priest needed something to live on and that was what their due was.

And the rest of the offering, the individual making the sacrifice, could share with their family in the way appointed by God. Now here the priests were doing two things that were not in the law.

The first was as well as taking their portion, presumably, it doesn't say, but presumably they were taking what they were due to get from the law, they were taking extra. They were able to take potluck and to dip their three-point fork into the pot and to take whatever came out of it for themselves.

[12:33] So in that sense, they were robbing the people who were making the sacrifice of something which they should have had. The priests were taking more than their share. And that was bad.

But what was much worse was that they also wanted to take something before the meat was boiled.

So they were saying, we don't really like boiled meat that much.

It's not so much of a treat. What we really want is a roast meal. We want roast meat. That is much more tasty. That is much more enjoyable for us. And so they would take the meat from the people by force if necessary before the fat had been burnt off.

And so they were taking not just part of what was due to the person making the sacrifice. They were also taking part that should have been devoted to God, which was evidence of the individual's devotion to God and desire to do what was right before him.

In other words, as well as being greedy for themselves and taking what they weren't entitled to, they were also at the same time leading the people into sin in that they weren't able to give God what they knew God was entitled to, what the law had demanded from them.

[13:51] There was religious abuse of the worst kind. Then a little bit later down in the passage, we see moral depravity.

So as well as this taking by force what wasn't right for them, the priests in that day, they were also sleeping with the woman who were responsible for looking after the temple courts.

Very much in the nature of what religions round about would have done. Very much against the law of God and what as God's people they should have been doing.

I have a question about that. Not expecting you to answer out loud, but think about it. Which of these abuses horrifies you more? Which do you find more shocking?

I think for most of us it's the sexual abuse that we find more shocking to begin with. We look at it and perhaps we say, well this is an old ritual, it's not really relevant in our day because we don't have to make these kind of sacrifices, but we understand more about what was happening in the second sin and that is really, really shocking to us.

[15:00] And so it should be. But I'd suggest the first sin should be no less shocking. Because what the people were doing here, what the priests were doing here, was deliberately disobeying God and the commands that he had given and more than that, they were encouraging the people to disobey God and forcing them to do it if they weren't willing to.

Not content just to get what didn't belong to them. They were taking from God and actually taking from the religious exercise of the people who came to the temple.

And that is absolutely shocking. And I would say, as we start with the religious abuse, perhaps it's almost inevitable what follows next.

That if we get things wrong in our relationship with God and what we give to God and the way we deal with God, then it is a slippery slope and that moral depravity is something which is very likely to follow.

So I would say we should be shocked at both the sins of these priests of Hophni and Phinehas and their associates. Both of them are utterly unacceptable and should be a real warning to us.

[16:23] Now hopefully none of us are engaged directly, at least in either of these sins. But there are a couple of lessons, I think, from it that I would take.

Two groups of people, I think, need to be very careful to make sure we don't fall into this kind of sin. Now I belong to both groups, so I'm talking to myself on both occasions as well, no doubt to many of you.

The first group is those of us who have grown up in Christian homes, who have grown up in environments where there was a love of the Lord Jesus and a desire to serve Him and to live for Him.

Now we know, I'm sure, that growing up in a Christian home isn't a guarantee that we'll come to faith in the Lord Jesus. Faith is a personal thing and we need to put our trust in the Lord Jesus and believe individually that He died for our sins and that we can have forgiveness through Him.

But even having done that, there's a danger, I think, for quite a lot of us that this is something we've known all our life, we're very familiar with and perhaps we don't treat it as seriously as we should.

[17:34] That obeying God, serving Him, seeking to bring others to Him and seeking in particular not to trip others up in their Christian faith or to do things that would draw them away from God, these can easily become too low priorities for us if our faith becomes too familiar and if we lose that burning desire to serve God and to live for Him and to draw others to Him.

And those of us who have been in a Christian environment all our life, we need to be very careful. We don't take it for granted. It is an enormous privilege to have godly parents and to be able to follow their example, but we need to make sure we are following that example, that we are devoted to the Lord Jesus, that we are living for Him.

The second group is Christian leaders, practically those who are in some kind of full-time Christian work, but all those who are leaders of God's people. And the real warning here is, am I doing anything that would distract people or would draw them away from their love for the Lord Jesus?

As they look at me or as I talk to them, and as they expect for someone who is in a position of leadership within a church to get a good example and good teaching, is there anything I am doing that could draw others away from Christ that could make them stumble in their faith?

Again, probably not as dramatically as in the case of Hophni and Phinehas for most of us, but nevertheless a real danger that as Christian leaders, as those who are supposed to be setting an example that actually we set the wrong example and we cause people to stumble in their faith.

[19:21] So two possibilities. Some of you may not fall into neither good, some of us fall into both, but let's examine ourselves if either of these applies to us. But let's look at the second horror that I think there is in the case of Hophni and Phinehas.

Eli eventually, eventually starts to plead with them and points out to them what is wrong and what they are doing and asks them to discontinue it.

But the writer who records, they didn't listen to their father's rebuke, for it was the Lord's will to put them to death. It was the Lord's will to put them to death.

Now I think that in some ways is quite shocking for us as well. Doesn't God want everyone to be saved? Isn't grace available to all those who will receive it?

Absolutely yes. And yet we can't receive God's grace without the working of God's Spirit in our lives. And it appears from Scripture, another example would be Pharaoh in Exodus, it appears from Scripture that there are those who get so far down into their sin and their antipathy to God and their absolute unwillingness to be obedient to God that God almost says, well, you have decided, you have resolved to be this way.

[20 : 56] And the Spirit stops striving with them and pricking their conscience and seeking to draw them to God. I put that out slightly tentatively, but I think that is the implication of what's said here.

But let me do it with two caveats. The first thing is, we can never make a judgment that someone is beyond God's grace. As far as we are concerned, everyone who is a sinner before God, if they will come to God, then they will receive his grace.

They will receive the mercy that he is willing to give. And if they come in faith to the Lord Jesus, they will receive forgiveness for sins. And we are not able to say whether someone's heart is so hard that they're never going to do that.

Our job is to constantly witness to them and seek to show them God's grace and to bring them to the Lord Jesus Christ. And the second thing I would say is that none of us individually should ever think that we are beyond God's grace.

Indeed, if we're having these thoughts, it probably means that we're not, that we still have some conscience. The Spirit is still working in our lives. However far we may sink, however great our sin may be, however much we may feel that we have failed God, for all of us, if we come to him, there is grace and he is willing to receive us and to heap that grace on us and to wonderfully bless us as we repent for our sins.

[22 : 32] So don't let the passage about hard hearts, about God's will, as in this passage, don't let them put you off seeking to win others for the Lord Jesus and don't let them put you off coming to Jesus for mercy and for forgiveness for all the wrong that you've done.

But two horrors, the horror of what the sons of Eli did and the horror of the fact that ultimately they were beyond redemption, that God had decreed that they must be punished for their wrong.

Let's move on and look at Eli. Eli, like many characters in scriptures, is a bit of a conundrum because you look at Eli in one hand and you say, here's a good man.

Here's a man who knew God, who honoured God and who had respect for God's word. And then you look at this chapter and you look at God's verdict on Eli where he says, why do you honour your sons more than me?

So I suggest that Eli was fundamentally a good man, but he had this fatal flaw that he endowed his sons, that he didn't discipline them as they should and ultimately that led to his downfall before God.

[23 : 48] But let's look at the good side first. As we look at Eli's dealings with Samuel and with his family, apart from his initial mistake in thinking what Hannah was doing when she was praying, they thought she was drunk.

Apart from that, Eli was a man who sought to bring Samuel and his family closer to God. He recognised in Hannah and Elkanah a couple who were devoted to the Lord, who wanted to live for him and who wanted to do what was right.

And indeed, who so much wanted to do what was right that they were willing to give their son to work in the temple to devote him to the Lord's service. And as they come to the temple, year after year, Eli is there.

He's there to meet them. He's there to bless them. He's there to pray for them. As Samuel ministers day to day in the temple, it appears that Eli was there similarly to be a father figure to him.

In many ways, I'm sure to show a good example, one of those in chapter three, when God speaks to Samuel, it's Eli who ultimately identifies that it's God speaking and Eli accepts even the judgment that's made against him and against his family, recognising the sovereignty of God.

[25 : 06] Eli was a man who knew God, a man who had great respect for God, and in many ways, a man who sought to do what was right. But he had this one fatal flaw that he managed to ignore completely the sins of his sons.

In fact, it may be a bit worse than that. When Eli condemns his sons, when he talks to them, gives them the kind of father's warning talk, he very much focuses on their immorality, and he talks about the fact that they're sinning against God, and there's this thing about if you're sinning against someone else, God may intercede.

Who's going to intercede if you're sinning against God? He doesn't really address their abuse of their priestly office. And there's some suggestion, I think, in what God says to Eli through the man of God that actually Eli was enjoying what his sons were getting wrongly from the people.

If we jump forward to chapter 4 and the death of Eli, it records that Eli was a rather fat man. He was rather big, and that was partly what contributed to his death.

And perhaps that obesity was partly from all these roast meals that his sons were taking and were giving to him. Now, Eli, it doesn't look like he was actively involved in this, but perhaps he was complicit in that he ignored what his sons were doing and he accepted the results of their sin even though he wasn't actively involved in it himself.

[26 : 44] One way or another, Eli got this badly wrong. He should have looked at his sons and at the very least, he should have said they weren't fit for priestly office.

Now, if you look at the law, he should have probably done quite a lot more to that in tending them away, perhaps even getting them put to death. But at the very least, he should have made sure that they didn't have the authority of being priests, that they were stripped of that duty, of that privilege before God.

Eli, up to the point when he remonstrates with them, it appears had done absolutely nothing. He was a man who was leading the people, who was in some ways it appears leading the people quite well, and yet he couldn't lead his own family, and he didn't have the courage to discipline his sons when he should have.

Great warning there to those of us who are parents, that we need to make sure in our dealing with our children, that we give them a good example, but also when they go wrong, that we are willing to rebuke them and to seek to bring them back into God's ways.

Too often, I suspect, many of us are a bit like Eli, and we don't have these hard conversations when we really should. But that is what we're called to do. We cannot ignore sin, whoever it is who is committing it.

[28 : 09] Whether it's sins in our family, whether it's sins in the church, whether it's sins of our nation, then we should be standing against them and making sure that people know what our position is and what is right before God.

God. It's a wonderful example of that, isn't there? In the New Testament, the Lord Jesus, he goes into the temple and as he sees the money changers. Now for many of us, we might have looked and we thought, this is terrible, how are they getting away with doing what they're doing there? The Lord Jesus didn't do that. He went in, he overturned their tables and he made it clear exactly what their sin was. They turned his father's house into a house of thieves.

And we need similarly to have that horror of sin and desire to see it put right. But Eli didn't and so Eli comes under God's judgment.

And the latter part of the chapter is this man of God who comes to Eli. A man of God coming to you is usually a bad sign in the Old Testament. It means you've done something wrong and God's going to rebuke you for it.

[29 : 13] It is that here, the man of God comes and he condemns Eli because he has failed to control his sons and because, says God, he has honoured his sons more than he honoured God.

And so the judgment comes on Eli that ultimately his family are going to lose priestly office. Now we scroll just very briefly forward in the books of Samuel and we see in the next chapter the death of Hophni and Phinehas on the same day they're called as a heart of the covenant is taken by their enemies.

Eli hears the news and he falls off the bench where he's sitting and he breaks his neck so he dies on the same day as well. Later in 1 Samuel we have an incident where Saul thinks that Eli's family are supporting David and he has most of them put to death.

And then in 2 Samuel the one who escapes, the only one who escapes from Saul's slaughter is himself caught up in the battle that follows David's death and Solomon removes him from priestly office.

And that is the end of the house of Eli as a priestly office. And instead it passes over to the descendants of Eliezer, one of the oldest sons of Abraham and when it talks here about the priest

who will be raised up, the faithful priest, the priest forever, it is almost certainly talking about Zadok who was the priest under Solomon having served alongside Abiathar, Eli's descendant under David.

[30 : 50] Zadok is the faithful priest and it is his household from then on who have the priesthood. Of course when we look at the eternal priest we probably also think about the Lord Jesus but I'm not sure that in this passage particularly that is the main interpretation of it but of course the Lord Jesus is a priest forever as well and we can think about that.

But the judgment comes on Eli's house and over a period in Saul's reign and David's reign and Solomon's reign Eli's house is taken away from the priesthood and is passed on to a different group of people also descendants of Aaron.

That in a sense isn't that important just a bit of history but it is important that Eli comes under God's judgment. And even though as I've said Eli was in many ways fundamentally a good man God couldn't ignore his sin and the effects of his sin therefore affected future generations.

In the same way as David's sin with Bathsheba and all things joined to that that's a devastating effect also on David's family. And even if we are people of God even if we know the Lord Jesus and love him ourselves our sins can also have a devastating effect on others.

Not that God is unwilling to forgive us as he forgave David and yet our sins do have consequences we need to be aware of these. But a fundamental lesson I think for many of us is we can't just look at ourselves and try through our personal devotions to please God.

[32 : 28] If we are in positions of any kind of authority whether as leaders as parents or whatever we need to have this concept of being willing to tackle the difficult issues and the things that would drag other people down and to seek to correct them and to see them one for the Lord Jesus.

Let's finish more positively. Samuel. I've called Samuel growing in grace. I think that's probably quite a good description of what it is here.

Samuel 2.29 Samuel continues to grow in stature and favour with the Lord and with people. When it says you go down the chapter that several times interspersed with all the sins of Eli's family you have these brief comments on Samuel.

We have one we didn't read tonight it was really part of last week's passage in verse 11 about Samuel serving before God. We have it again as Eli's sons evil is described in verse 18 Samuel was ministering before the Lord then description of what Samuel's parents did.

Verse 26 the boy Samuel continued to go in stature and favour with the Lord and with people. And then if we read over into the first verse of chapter 3 it says the boy Samuel ministered before the Lord under Eli.

[33 : 54] In other words in all this chaos that was created by Eli's sons in all their sinfulness and despising God in all Eli's weakness in dealing with the sins of his family we have this bright ray that we have Samuel who is growing and is maturing and is coming to faith in God and who ultimately will take over much of the role that was previously Eli who would become the prophet and the judge of Israel.

So two things about the honour that we can see for Samuel. And the first is Samuel's family. It is Hannah and Elkanah.

This couple from Ramah who had previously been childless though Elkanah had children by his other wife previously been childless and Hannah promises that if God gives her a son that son will be devoted to her and will serve in the temple.

The son comes along Hannah keeps her words and she hands Samuel over to be devoted to God. They weren't that far away so I suspect they visited him quite often but he was devoted to serving God and every year it says they came back as they came to do give their sacrifice and they brought Samuel a new robe.

It was because he was getting bigger as time went on. Every year a sign of their love for Samuel there was this robe that they brought along. And every year as I've said they met with Eli and Eli as he saw this lovely family he wanted to bless them and to pray for them and God honoured them.

[35 : 38] He honoured Hannah who had previously been barren she had another five children three sons and two daughters. A lovely family devoted to God keeping their promises living for him.

Good if we can have families like that rather than the family of Eli that we have families where God's name is honoured and where we seek to serve him and to devote our lives and our family life to him.

And then we have Samuel. Samuel is being prepared. It says in chapter 3 that Samuel didn't yet know God. I think that means particularly Samuel never had the personal experience of God speaking to him.

and yet in chapter 2 Samuel is being prepared for his service in chapter 3 and beyond. And these little reports about Samuel are kind of progress reports on how he was getting on in the temple. So to begin with he was just helping Eli. He ministered before the Lord under Eli. Then Eli kind of goes out of the picture in verse 18 it just says Samuel was ministering before the Lord.

[36 : 52] Perhaps Samuel by this stage become a bit more independent a bit more personal faith and a bit more knowing what it was that God's will was for him.

Verse 26 Samuel continued to grow in stature and favour with the Lord and with people. As he learned from Eli as he served God in the temple so he grew he matured he developed and he became a good servant of God that people could look at and they could say here is a good example where Eli's sons are very bad examples.

And then in chapter 3 God starts speaking to Samuel and everything that God says to Samuel comes about and the people recognise there is a great prophet here.

We again if we are parents or indeed as a church when we have so many young children among us we need to really care for and nurture our young people.

We need to show them an example of what it is to live for God we need to teach them God's word simply and faithfully and seek to encourage them to serve and to follow and to grow in their knowledge of the Lord Jesus.

[38 : 07] Children must never be seen as a bit of an extra a bit of a nuisance in church something that we yes it's good whether there's good to have a bit of life around the church but not really that important. Our children are the future of the church they are those who know who may have gone to be like Samuel and to serve God in similar kind of ways and to be great men and women of faith and we need as a church to value them and to look after them and to teach them faithfully the word of God to show them that we care for them because God cares for them and we want what is best for them from God and then perhaps it can be said of them that they grow in stature and favour with the Lord and his people reminder here I think isn't there of the Lord Jesus end of Luke's gospel we know we know very little about Jesus' childhood but one thing we do know the last verse of Luke 2 the evangelist records

Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man very much a reflection of the same kind of thing as with Samuel grew in wisdom and stature in favour with God and man may our prayer be that our young people in this church may come to know the Lord Jesus for themselves and may then grow in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man let's pray for them let's encourage them and so we have God honoured through Samuel and his family let's finish with Eric Liddow Eric Liddow centre just around the corner in Morningside that's named after Eric Liddow of course was a very famous athlete also an international rugby player but best known as an athlete and through the film Chariots of Fire Eric Liddow won the 400 metres at the 1924 Olympics in Paris and there's a story that says

Eric Liddow is preparing to go to the track for his 400 metres final that one of the American masseurs passed him a note and that note says in the old book it says he who honours me I will honour in other words a quotation from 1 Samuel chapter 2 and that American although on an opposing side in terms of the Olympics he recognised that Eric Liddow was someone who loved God who knew him and who honoured him in that particular context of course it was that Eric Liddow had refused to run on a Sunday so he'd given up on his favourite event the 100 metres and had gone instead for the event the 400 metres and indeed you could say that God honoured him as he won that event and as he broke the world record but of course Eric Liddow's story didn't end there after Eric Liddow had been to the Olympics he did what he'd always intended to do and he followed his parents to the mission field he went to China and he served there faithfully for a good number of years and in the end he ended up in an internment camp where he died at quite a young age for Eric Liddow athletics running was important it was something he believed

God had gifted him in and that because of that that he should honour God through it but he wasn't looking for glory for himself and it wasn't so important that having won in 1924 he was thinking well I need to come back in 1928 or to go to some other championships and make a bigger career of myself as an athlete Eric Liddow wanted to put God first and to honour God in all he did and so it was more important than running in the race where he was felt to have the best chance of winning it

was more important than pursuing a career in this country and perhaps having even greater success in athletics or in rugby or perhaps even in a different sport for Eric Liddow the most important thing was that in his life he should honour God and that's where we should be as well that it's not about the greed of Hophni and Phinehas it's certainly not about ignoring God's will and his way and of bringing others down in their faith rather like

Samuel like Eric Liddow like the Lord Jesus our greatest desire should be that God's name is glorified and that we serve him and that we live for him and that for me is the challenge of 1 Samuel 2 in my life do I really honour God do I put God first or are there lots of other things that I put ahead of them that are to do with my selfishness and my ambition for myself and I challenge all of us as we go away tonight to think about am I honouring God or are there things that bring horror to God's heart I would bring horror to the heart of others if they knew about them about the sin in my life if there are things that are holding us back let's confess them before God and let's go ahead and live for him and serve him and honour him let's pray together Father we thank you for your word we thank you that even those passages where there is judgment where there is evil where there is apparent darkness yet we can see you at work and there are things that we can learn from them and we thank you even in the darkest days even the most difficult times as was the case as Samuel was growing up that you are at work often quietly often unseen at that point but yet you are raising up people to serve you and to live for you we bid you help each of us to be true servants of you and of our

[44 : 14] Lord that we may honour you and so we know that we are never you are never any man's debtor and as we seek to honour you that we will receive back much much more than we could ever give to you we thank you for the great grace that we've received through the Lord Jesus and for the daily grace that we receive from you help us never to take it for granted help us in our lives to seek to honour you and to serve you we thank you for this time together this evening we thank you for your word and we pray to you bless it to our hearts and help us to live for you for our Lord Jesus this week we ask in his name Amen