

"Speak LORD, For Thy Servant Heareth"

I Samuel 3:1-18, Trinity Sunday VII

July 26, 2009

Beloved of the Lord..... Every Sunday in the liturgy of our hymnbook, we make a general confession of our sins to God. Too often I'm afraid that when we confess that we are poor miserable sinners we are so used to the words that we fail seriously ponder the greatness of our sins in the heart. We all know that we are sinners, but often we do not take the time to stop and consider just what are our own particular sins may be.

Most often when we confess sin, we think of bad things that we do. We sin when we covet, lust, steal, rebel, hurt or hate. Sins of commission are the sins we do. There is another sin however, the sin of what we don't do. Sins of omission are those things God commands us to do, but we don't. James 4:17 says, "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." For example, it is not only a sin to bodily hurt our neighbor, but also a sin not to do them good. Likewise, while we cannot rebuke every sin of our neighbor, there are certain times when we sin by keeping silence. The positive side of God's law is those things we ought to be doing. Regarding sins of omission Jesus once said to the Pharisees, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier *matters* of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

Often it is the case with sins of omission, that we become partakers of other men's sin. By not rebuking the sin we become partakers of that sin. In our lesson today Eli was guilty of the sins of his sons because he did not restrain them. God therefore spoke to Eli and led Eli to repentance through a little child named Samuel who humbly did God's will. May we humbly receive God's Word as Samuel did, and not be partakers of other men's sins. "Speak Lord for thy servant heareth."

I. Eli's sins of omission. God's lesson for us today is really about two people, two examples of how to be and how not to be. In some ways they represent the old man within who does not do what God commands, and the new man within who desires to do all God commands. As for the elderly Eli, though he was a good priest in most every way, he was a miserable sinner in fatherhood. God through Samuel told him, "I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knoweth, because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." Notice first that his sons made themselves vile. Eli taught them God's Word, right from wrong, but they did not listen. Their vile and wicked lives were their own fault. Children should not blame their sins on their parents. The sins of Eli's sons were twofold: first, they

took more than their share of the allotted meat offering. This sin was the equivalent of a minister stealing from the collection plate. Second, they sinned by seducing young women who came to the tabernacle to sacrifice. They were thus both thieves and fornicators. They served Satan by sin and led others to do the same.

Eli did at one point rebuke his sons however Eli didn't restrain them. God even sent Eli an unnamed prophet who warned Eli that if he didn't correct his ways, God would slay both his sons in one single day - but Eli still didn't repent. As both a father and priest, Eli could've punished them, banished them, had them removed from office or put to death for their crimes, but Eli did nothing. By this sin of omission he was a partaker of their sins. By doing nothing and putting off repentance, he honored his sons more than God. Jesus said, "He that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." As for those sons, God rewarded them for their sins of theft and fornication. In one day they were both slain in battle. Proverbs 14:32 says, "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death." We too will one day die for our sins and Christ alone is the hope of our life. The lesson of Eli's two sons is that we do not put off repentance but seek God's forgiveness before it is too late. "As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

From the lesson of Eli we learn discipline is an important part of childrearing. The Bible says, "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." The Bible also says, "Ye fathers provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Thus we as Christian parents must exercise both the law and Gospel with our children. A proper balance between the two is needed. We first baptize our children so they will be washed clean of their sins and the Holy Ghost work faith within, and then we train up that child in the way he should go with the guide of God's Word. We teach them to pray to Jesus, to ask for His forgiveness, and to trust that "Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so." Too much law or too much Gospel will be detrimental, but we as parents must also trust the Holy Spirit will guide us in the proper balance. Pastor Miller writes, "A Christian home needs to avoid the two extremes OF indifference, on the one hand, where you let them grow up like weeds; and on the other hand where the atmosphere is oppressive and demanding, and children cannot be children."

It is like that in church also. The law and Gospel must be properly divided. We need to hear God's condemnation of our sins in the law but also the absolution of the Gospel for our salvation. If we come to

church every Sunday and hear nothing but God's grace and mercy and love, we will surely grow comfortable and secure in our sins and fall away. If we hear nothing but the law and God's wrath we will either despair or conclude we can be saved by the law. Thanks be to God the Holy Ghost is the real teacher of God's Word. We know "that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ."

II. Samuel's obedience to God's Word. God was truly doing a good work by revealing to Eli God's wrath against Eli's sin. It was only to bring him to repentance before Eli died so that he would enter life everlasting. When Eli did not listen to the unnamed prophet God sent first, the second time around God sent a little child named Samuel. If Eli would not hear God' Word from an adult, maybe he would hear God's Word from a child. Sometimes a child of God can say more with a few words than a pastor can say in a whole sermon. Jesus said "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

As for Samuel, Samuel became God's child through the Old Testament Means of Grace, circumcision. We too have been baptized with this same grace. Samuel also had been raised by a God-fearing mother named Hannah. She had been childless, so she vowed to the Lord that if He gave her a child, she would give that child back to Him. God heard and answered her prayer. After Samuel was weaned she left him in God's hands in the "house of the Lord." To Eli she said, "For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition....Therefore also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord."

In like manner our own baptized children do not belong to us. They belong to the Lord. He loans them to us, and in faith we loan them to Him. Indeed Jesus loves our children more than we do, and yet He loves each believer as His own child. And even if we were God's only child upon the face of the whole earth, and we rebelled against our heavenly Father by not doing anything He said, and doing all He had forbidden, in mercy your heavenly Father would still send to this earth His heavenly Son, and this heavenly Son would still willingly come and save you even if it were you alone. You are precious in His sight! Jesus came not only to save the whole world from sin, but He came to save single and solitary you from your sin. Yet He does not require one single or solitary good work from you, for He has done all. He desires your faith alone in Him which is not faith in yourself. Through faith alone you "are all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."

When we consider our sins of commission and our sins of omission, we ought to consider Jesus who came to this earth as a holy Child. Whereas we daily sin by omitting the good, Jesus committed only good. Whereas

we daily sin by committing evil, Jesus omitted the evil and did only the good. As a holy Child Jesus took the place of every sinful child. As a sinless man Jesus took the place of all sinful men. On the cross all our sins of commission and omission were placed upon Him, as if He had omitted and committed all. After the most bitter sufferings of the cross, the Son committed His soul into the hands of His heavenly Father. The Bible says, "When he suffered, he threatened not; but committed *himself* to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed."

It is the Word of God, it is Christ the Living Word, who heals us of all sins. Though only a child, Samuel knew well this healing of sins as all God's children do. Eli was healed as well when He heard God's Word through the mouth of a little child. Eli repented of his sins and was saved likewise by the Gospel promise. We know this for Eli said, "It is the Lord: let him do what seeth him good." This is acceptance of God's will which can only come from a trust in His mercy. We are just like the old man Eli, dead in trespasses and sin yet made alive through Christ our life. We too are like that little child Samuel according to the new man, that willing spirit. Though he was confused at first, when the Lord spoke to him, the fourth time Samuel said, "Speak for thy servant heareth." That is a willing spirit which is moved by love and faith. That is why we gladly answer saying, "Here am I send me, send me!" That is why we gladly speak God's Words of salvation to others, that they too may be saved!

Finally, let us learn more perfectly not only to make a general confession of our sins to God, but to daily confess our own particular sins and turn in faith to our one and only Savior who carries healing in His wings. When we go to bed every night, let us likewise commit our soul into the hands of our heavenly Father. "Go lie down; and it shall be, if He call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth." In God's Kingdom of Grace, the wound of death brings us only the healing of heaven. In His eternal arms there are no tears, only life everlasting. Amen.

Pastor Tobin Pederson, 7685 Maple Hill Rd. Corcoran, MN, 55340, 763-494-5164, srmn0765
solideogloria96@comcast.net , orthodoxlutheran.org