

SAMUEL

I Samuel 1:9-18—So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drunk. Now Eli the priest was sitting upon his seat by the door-post of the temple of the Lord. And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore. And she vowed a vow, and said, O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thy handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thy handmaid, but wilt give unto thy handmaid a man-child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head. And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the Lord, that Eli marked her mouth. Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken. And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee. And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I poured out my soul before the Lord. Count not thy handmaid for a wicked woman; for out of the abundance of my complaint and my provocation have I spoken hitherto. Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace; and the God of Israel grant thy petition that thou hast asked of him. And she said, Let thy handmaid find favor in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat; and her countenance was no more sad.

Samuel 3:1-4:1—And the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli. And the word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no frequent vision. And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place (now his eyes had begun to wax dim, so that he could not see), and the lamp of God was not yet gone out, and Samuel was laid down to sleep, in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was; that the Lord called Samuel; and he said, Here am I. And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down. And the Lord called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again. Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed unto him. And the Lord called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child. Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place. And the Lord came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel said, Speak; for thy servant heareth. And the Lord said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from the beginning even unto the end. For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons did bring a curse upon themselves, and he restrained them not. And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be expiated with sacrifice nor offering for ever. And Samuel lay until the morning, and opened the doors of the house of the Lord. And Samuel feared to show Eli the vision. Then Eli called Samuel, and said, Samuel, my son. And he said, Here am I. And he said, What is the thing that the Lord hath spoken unto thee? I pray thee, hide it not from me: God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide anything from me of all the things that he spake unto thee. And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him. And

he said, It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good. And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan even to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord. And the Lord appeared again in Shiloh; for the Lord revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord. And the word of Samuel came to all Israel.

Let us pray, recognizing the need of the Anointing:

Dear Lord, we want to thank You this evening. We have committed this time to You and this time of the ministry of Your Word. All we want to do now is recognize that without You we can do nothing. Lord, let that anointing power and grace be upon the speaking of Your Word and also on the hearing. Let Your purpose in these times and in these days be fulfilled in full measure. We ask it in the name of our Messiah, the Lord Jesus. Amen.

SOME LINKS FROM THE PAST

We have been talking about links. I am not sure that is the best term because it reminds me of golf courses. But what we mean is something that somehow links us to the Lord in the day of great distress and darkness. It is one of the most wonderful things in the Word of God that at every single point of confusion, darkness, or distress, the Lord has had that servant of His or servants who have provided that link with Him and have been a turning point in the purpose of God.

Abraham

The greatest turning point was Abraham. Up to that point, the Lord had only dealt with people as individuals or as families. But from that point, He began to deal with a people. One of my friends once said something in a moment of inspiration which I believe was truly from the Lord. He said, "When the God of glory appeared to our father Abraham, He placed within him the whole genetic history of redemption." From that point onwards, we hear of the Lord's redeeming plan for mankind. Of course, we who are the Lord's, if we are of the law, the Jews, and are saved, Abraham is our father. If we are Gentiles or non-Jews, we are also of our father Abraham because He has saved us with the same living gift of faith that Abraham had.

Moses

Moses was another great turning point. He saw Him who is invisible and turned away from the riches and sophistication of Egypt. It cost him everything. He was Pharaoh's grandson, adopted it is true, but nevertheless the grandson. He was educated in the highest schools in Egypt and in military tactics which we have learned from our Jewish sources. But the most amazing thing is that Moses was at a turning point in the history of God's dealing with mankind. It was about a people who were about to be born, and Moses was the key person in that. Of course there were others with him—Aaron, Miriam, and Joshua. I have in my home a little silver plaque from hundreds of years ago and it depicts the whole Red Sea. The Jews were passing through the Red Sea and at the same time Pharaoh's army was being drowned in the sea. One of the things that intrigued me about that engraving in silver was a little figure standing by

Moses, and it was Joshua. He was but a boy just like Samuel, but he stayed in Moses' tent where he learned how to serve. These are all turning points.

Samuel

In our Jewish tradition, Samuel is far greater than David, Solomon, and Daniel. They were all turning points in the economy of God, but Samuel has always been understood by the rabbis to be one of the most amazing turning points in the history of God's dealings with mankind. It was, of course, the producing of the king. Samuel anointed the wrong king and the right king. He actually anointed Saul and blessed him which we sometimes forget. Saul was a man of the flesh; David was a man after God's heart. Of course, there are a whole number more we could talk about, but I am here to talk about Samuel and what Samuel means to us and should mean to us.

Daniel

Another one of the greats was Daniel. The children of God would never have returned to the land, rebuilt the city of God, the temple of God, Nazareth, Bethlehem, and other places all through the land, which had already been prophesied by some of the prophets having to do with the coming of the Messiah, if it had not been for Daniel and his incredible intercessory ministry. So important was Daniel's intercessory ministry that the archangel Gabriel was sent to him with a message: "O man, greatly beloved, from the moment you began to pray, your prayer was heard." But so important was Daniel's ministry that the prince of Persia and the prince of Greece waylaid the prince of Israel, Michael, and they had a fight. It sounds like a fairy tale or a legend, but it was very real. We know that all human history is the expression of spiritual beings. In that incredible manner Gabriel said, "I am so sorry I am late. I was so caught up with this fight that the prince of Persia and the prince of Greece were having with the prince of Israel Michael, that I felt I had to help him. I stayed with him for three weeks. Now I have come." The most amazing thing is that he gave to Daniel a mathematical prophecy. That mathematical prophecy led directly to the coming of the Lord Jesus. It does not matter how you look at it, it all ends in His birth, His ministry, His life, His crucifixion, His death, His resurrection, and His coming again.

WHY THE LORD NEEDS A LINK

It reveals to us just how important these servants of God are to the Lord. It may also make us question as to why the Lord does not do it Himself. Why does He have to have Abraham, Moses, and in a lesser scale, Joshua, Samuel, David, Daniel, and John the Baptist to usher in the King? It is a good question. Some of you have heard me say that the Lord could do it much more easily without us than with us. You and I are the problems to the Lord. We, generally speaking, cause a lot of confusion, a lot of distress, and a lot of delay. Why doesn't the Lord do it Himself? He is Sovereign, He is self-sufficient, and He does not need us. Why then does He wait in every turning point in divine history for the right person to be there to be with Him? I have only one answer to it—fellowship. In some extraordinary way God the Father, the Son, and the Holy

Spirit believe in fellowship. They will not act without the redeemed. They will not fulfill their purpose without those who belong to the Lord. There is really no other explanation.

THE LORD IS TRAINING HIS OVERCOMERS

We have been hearing about the overcomers. That is what the Lord is waiting for because He is training us. He called Abraham My friend. He spoke of Moses as one that He spoke to face to face. When Moses died, there is a very strange Hebrew construction that says he died by the Word of The Lord according to the English translation. But the Hebrew says he died on the lips of the Lord, and the rabbis tell us that God the Almighty loved Moses so much that when he came to the end, He kissed him and he went to be the Lord. We shall never really understand why the Lord waits for us. Why does He not get on with it and do it Himself? But the fact is we will find the intercessor at every single turning point.

THE APOSTLE PAUL WAS A LINK IN A TURNING POINT OF HISTORY

In my estimation, I believe the apostle Paul was another turning point. In some incredible way he became an apostle to the Gentiles. So tremendous was the ministry that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit gave to him, that in the greatest exposition of the gospel in the sixty-six books of the Bible, he took three whole chapters to deal with the Jewish people. He was so afraid that the fact of his apostleship to the Gentiles would be misunderstood as if God had finished with Israel, the Jewish people. It is incredible. So in these eight marvelous chapters that cover the whole gospel, we also have three whole chapters that deal with the problem of the Jewish people. Can God unelect what He has elected? Can God unchoose what He has chosen? Doesn't this bring home to us how important intercession is? The apostle Paul opened those three chapters, Romans 9, 10, and 11, with these extraordinary words, "I could wish that I was anathema, cursed for my brethren's sake, who are Israelis." That is intercession. It is not just in the head, but it is in the heart. It is that passion and burden in the heart that brings us who are the redeemed of the Lord into the closest communion that we can have with *the* Intercessor, the Lord Jesus.

INTERCESSION

So this whole question of links for me is a tremendous subject, and we cannot deal with it without understanding intercession. Abraham, Moses, and Samuel are called the three greatest intercessors up to that point in the Word. Are you aware of how remarkable this is? Do you realize that the Lord wants you to be an intercessor? You cannot in one sense be an overcomer without being an intercessor. This word intercessor has been banded around much like the words "born again" which has lost its meaning. Many people say they are intercessors but they are not. They are prayer warriors, but they are not intercessors. Intercession begins with the knowledge of the will of God. Once you know what God is planning to do, then intercession by the power and the ability of the Holy Spirit begins. Why the Lord wants intercessors, I will never understand until I am in the presence of the Lord. But the Lord says, "I will not do it if there is not an intercessor." Indeed, to Ezekiel on one occasion He said, "I sought for a man to stand in

the gap and build up the wall, but I found none. Therefore have I poured out my indignation upon the land.”

SAMUEL WAS A LINK IN THE TURNING POINT OF HISTORY

As we consider Samuel, one of the most incredible things about him is that he stood between a murmuring, gain-saying, stiff-necked people and the Lord. In one sense, Samuel made a mistake, but from one point of view it was not a mistake because he had told the people, “Do not have a king. You are making a big mistake.” Saul was a magnificent man, head and shoulders above the rest. There were many things about Saul that made Samuel realize he was a man of men and somehow or other an absolutely, seemingly divine choice to be king. Samuel was taken in by Saul until he discovered that Saul was a man of the flesh and could not obey the Lord. He obeyed the Lord partly, but only partly. He could not obey the Lord. He undid the work of the kingdom and brought tragedy to the people of God. But again and again Samuel interceded and called upon the Lord to have mercy upon Israel. And the Lord had mercy. In the end, as we know, Samuel discovered this shepherd boy. As he looked at him, he saw that he was nothing like Saul in height, breadth of shoulders, or muscles. This boy was just a shepherd boy, and the Lord said to Samuel: “This is the man; anoint him. He is a man after My own heart.”

Samuel was a turning point in the divine dealings with the people and in the fulfillment of the divine purpose. It is no wonder that Samuel stands so high in the Jewish view of the history of Israel. We can learn a lot from Samuel.

Now I want to speak on three things: 1) Total and unconditional commitment to the Lord: 2) Total surrender of my will to the Lord: 3) Total obedience whatever the cost

TOTAL COMMITMENT

Hannah's Commitment

Dear Hannah found it unbearable that the other wife of Elkanah, Peninnah, had so many children and she did not have a single one. The friction in the home only caused her more agony and anguish. She went to the Lord in a travail of prayer, pouring out her heart. The Word says that she wept sore. In her anguish, she never made any noise; it was silent prayer, but her lips moved. Eli thought she was drunk; but he was not exactly perceptive or discerning. He said, “You are drunk, woman. Stop drinking wine and strong drink.” She said, “I am not drunk. I have not drunk wine nor strong drink, but I have such anguish in my heart. I have sought the Lord that He should give me a man child.” Then she made this vow which she had already made silently to the Lord: “If the Lord grants the request of this His handmaid, I will commit him and dedicate him to the Lord for the rest of his life.” That is something to say for someone who wanted a child above everything else and if she had this one child she was going to give him totally to the Lord. That is total commitment.

Name of the Lord

You mothers have no idea the influence you will have upon your children. Hannah is one of the great figures in Israeli history because it was her commitment to the Lord, total and

unconditional, that led to the gift of a son and his being set apart for the rest of his life. You have within the first few chapters of the first book of Samuel, Hannah's great song. It is extraordinary. It reveals the fact that a mother can have enormous influence on the course of a son's life. You would have thought that when Samuel was born that he would be upset that his mother was going to leave him in the tabernacle, but it never happened that way. So great was her love for Samuel and so great was her own personal commitment to the Lord that it affected Samuel. She called him "name of the Lord." I find it very difficult to name the unmentionable name of the Lord. I know in some Messianic circles it is banded around, but I personally have a very real problem with it. I always say the Lord, Adonai, or Hashem, the Name. That unmentionable Name was only mentioned three times in one day in the 365 days of the year, and that was the Day of Atonement in the public courtyard. The high priest lifted up his hands and three times he blessed them in the unmentionable Name of the Lord. That is why we do not know how the name was pronounced. We know the vowel sound but that is all. Some people say Yahweh or something else. I think it is better to say the Lord or the Name. But isn't it amazing that she called Samuel the "name of the Lord"?

In I Peter 3:15 it says, "But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts." The fact that she called Samuel the "name of the Lord" seems to me an indication of what her longing for Samuel should be, that it should be a sanctifying of the Lord in his heart—set apart. We are taught in the pattern prayer, "Our Father who art in heaven, *hallowed* be Thy name." *Hallowed* is a very old English word for "sanctified be Thy name."

Let me say one last thing to you dear mothers. You will have a lasting impact upon your children if with love and grace you teach them concerning the Lord and rear them in the fear of the Lord, not in some slavish fear which many have done unfortunately with dire consequences, but with love and grace.

Samuel Had to Make His Own Commitment to the Lord

One other thing about Samuel was that he had to make his own commitment to the Lord. I find it amazing that Samuel did not argue when he was separated from his mother. He was not embittered nor had any quarrel with the Lord or with his mother. After he was weaned, she left him in the tabernacle with Eli and would only have seen him on certain occasions when she made a journey to the tabernacle. Therefore, Samuel had to make a total commitment to the Lord that was unconditional. There were no ifs and buts; it was a total committal. No one will ever be an overcomer without a total and unconditional commitment to the Lord Jesus. Without that personal commitment, you will never be an overcomer. It is the very root of overcoming, to be whole-heartedly for the Lord, whole-heartedly for His Lordship, whole-heartedly for the truth that He is, whole-heartedly for the church that He has brought to birth, whole-heartedly for the gospel. It requires a total and unconditional commitment. Do not think you can get away with half measures.

Uncommitted Christians

The greatest problem we are facing today, not only in the United States but in all the western countries, is the half committedness of Christian people. They are not committed. They are half committed, a third committed. It means they go to at least one meeting a week and

somehow or other just coast along. They are complacent. As long as they are happy and getting what they want is all that matters. This Laodicean condition is the greatest problem we face.

Why do you think the Lord has allowed this to happen to the United States? The church itself is basically uncommitted. It has not spoken up against things it should have spoken up against. It has not been light in darkness. It has not been salt in corruption. It has not held the testimony of Jesus in purity and obedience. Therefore, the Lord has allowed these things to come to pass in the western nations. Where do you find the church of God today? You find it in Asia, Africa or South America. There you will find the living expression of the church, maybe with its faults and failings as in the New Testament; nevertheless it is a living expression of the church. But in the West there is this half and half kind of manna. You are in a kind of place where the pastor preaches a message on Sunday; then you go home and have a meal, discuss the message comfortably as to whether he was right or wrong, what he said or did not say. There is no such thing as a revolutionary message. That would be too much. If it was a revolutionary message that turned the church upside down and inside out, we would be upset. It would mean for the first time we would be challenged to really pray. It would be the first time we would be challenged to be totally committed to the Lord. It would be the first time we make a personal commitment to the Lord. I find it very sad to have to say such a thing. You know I have been saying for years that the United States is like the Titanic; it is sailing into an iceberg, and it has no idea that it will sink within ten minutes when it hits the iceberg.

This kind of commitment that Samuel had is absolutely a necessity. It is not optional; it is not something you can either accept or reject. There is no way you and I can be overcomers without such a commitment, total and unconditional.

No Alternative to Total Commitment

Let me take you one step further: there is no alternative to such total commitment. There is no substitute for it. That is the gift that Samuel is to us. He was but a little boy and at that point he did not even know the Lord. Nevertheless, he was committed to the Lord, and then he himself ratified Hannah's commitment of him. There may be a young person here whose parents committed you to the Lord when you were born, maybe they consecrated you to the Lord, but you have never ratified their commitment; you never confirmed it by your own personal commitment to the Lord. This is something tremendous. I cannot exaggerate the importance of this matter. It is total.

I think of what it says also in this same book of Samuel: "Those who honor me, I will honor." To honor the Lord does not mean you take His name on your lips in prayer or you sing about Him. It means that you are totally committed to Him. Away with any other kind of Christianity! As far as the Lord is concerned, there is no other.

TOTAL SURRENDER OF MY WILL

Then there is total surrender of my will. Most of us have a very great problem here. We are, generally speaking, people of a will. We have problems when the Lord wants our will to be surrendered. We are not happy with that. That is not the gospel. The gospel we want is that the Lord will save us, clean up our mess, make us happy, help us get to middle age and the middle-age spread. Then we can be complacent and not too active for the rest of our years till we are

partly deaf and blind at which time the Lord will take us. Is this the gospel? Is that what the Lord came into this world to die for?

The surrender of our will is the biggest battle in any Christian life whether young or old. Do not think it is just a question when you are in your teens and you have your life before you, that you have a great battle over your will—what you will or what He wills. It can also be for those who are older. How many times as we get older that the whole question of our will comes to the fore!

The point of the matter is that we are responsible for this mess we are in. You think the Lord is just happy about that and sort of say, “Oh, I will go along with them. They do not really want to surrender their will to Me. I will just play ball with them and go along with them.” No, that is not what the Lord will do. It means you will not reign with Him in eternity to come. As Campbell Morgan said many years ago, the kingdom of God is bigger than the city Jerusalem. In other words, you can be born again and see the kingdom, and not necessarily be part of the bride. It is obvious, isn't it?

Do you think the Lord is only interested in some kind of Marilyn Monroe figure—beautiful figure, beautiful eyes, beautiful eyelashes, beautiful hair, beautiful everything and nothing between the ears? Maybe that is being unkind to Marilyn Monroe, but you know what I mean. Do you really believe the Lord wants to marry a bride like that? Of course not. He wants a bride that has learned how to overcome in small personal situations, in family situations, in relationships, in business, in church life, and in national life. He wants the kind of people who have learned how by His indwelling power and grace to overcome. It is so simple.

Personal Testimony

Some years ago I was asked to preach in Melbourne Hall in Leicester in the middle of Britain. The pastor had been there for thirty-four years, and he asked if I would speak on Romans 9, 10, and 11. I went with great trepidation. The brother who took me had been the man that the pastor had led to the Lord and had personally helped him to discipleship in his early years. As I stood in the pulpit, I remembered that Dr. F.B. Meyer had founded that assembly. In the course of preaching on Romans 9, 10, 11 I happened to say as an aside, “I was saved by the grace of God through the life story of C.T. Studd. He upset everybody by writing parodies on Christian hymns. “Backward Christian soldiers, marching as from war, with the candy floss going on before.” That upset the Christians, especially those wooden half-hearted, uncommitted Christians. They believed he was a drug addict or some kind of alcoholic. Then he wrote another little parody: “Some want to live within the sound of chapel chime and bell, I would rather run a rescue shop within a yard of hell.”

When I read that book of the life story of C.T. Studd, it was the first Christian book I had ever had in my hand. I partly read it because the Sunday school teacher had dished it out to all the other boys and did not give me one. I had to go and ask him for it, and then I almost felt I had to read it. The very fact that it said missionary statesman and famous cricketer caught me. I thought how can a person be a Christian who is an athlete? That is impossible. I thought all Christians were diseased or hypocrites. I read the book in one week. At the end of it, I remember I stood. Then I thought, they did not stand, I think they knelt. Then I knelt, but I felt uncomfortable kneeling, so I got up. I put my hands up and said, “Oh God, would You do to me

what You did in C.T. Studd and make me what You made him.” I do not think I realized what I was asking. I had very little idea of the total commitment that C.T. had made. When he had to have a doctor’s letter saying he was fit to go as a missionary, the doctor would not give it to him and said, “You are a museum of illnesses. You cannot make it either in China or anywhere else.” He went with the Cambridge Seven to China, then he went to India, then he went to the Congo, and he spent the rest of his years in central Africa. When he died, 30,000 ex-cannibals came to his funeral. He never went back to England on furlough. He was not a chocolate soldier.

I told them that little story. After the service, I went with that dear man who had been there for thirty-four years into the registry. As I sat down, he said, “Lance, do you know that you stood in the pulpit where C.T. preached his last message that he ever gave in Britain. He never came back. He went to China to India to the Congo.” “No,” I said. He said, “Do you know Dr. F.B. Meyer was so impressed with C.T. that when he got him in the registry he said, “Tell me. What is the secret of your life and ministry?” C.T. thought for a while and then he said, “I have surrendered my will in its entirety to the Lord Jesus.”

The Surrender of Our Will Is the Secret of Overcoming

There is no alternative to a total surrender of the will. All your arguments with God are because of your will. All your arguments with one another are because of your will. Our church dog fights and cat fights are nearly all to do with somebody's / and someone else's /. When you have one person saying, “I think, I know, I feel, I want,” and another one saying, “I think, I know, I feel, I want,” you have a dog fight. And generally speaking, the Lord retires. He leaves you to the fight. In other words, fight it out amongst yourselves. If you are not prepared totally to surrender your will, this is what you will get.

It is amazing to me that when we follow our own will, we are not happy. We get what we want or we will into being what we want, but we are not happy.

Samuel surrendered his will to the Lord. I find it amazing that the Lord stood in that tabernacle and called him by name. He had been named with the name of the Lord. And it was the Lord who said, “Samuel! Samuel!” And he ran off to Eli and said, “You are calling me. I am here.” Eli said, “I did not call you. Go lie down.” He went three times. Eli was not very good in perceiving what was happening but finally said after three times: “It is the Lord. When He says your name again, go and say to Him, ‘Here I am, your bonds slave [in Hebrew, it is not a hired servant but a bonds slave] hears.’” There is so much in the Word of God on this matter of hearing.

I do not want to belabor this matter but total surrender of our will is the key to overcoming. Those who are going to be the links with the Lord in the last stage of world history, need to be not only totally and unconditionally committed to the Lord, but have surrendered their will to Him. Then it is His will and not mine. It is the fulfillment of those wonderful words in the Philippian letter where the apostle wrote, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work of His good pleasure” (see 2:12-13). There is no conflict there between your will and His will. He will work out His plan for you. He will will and work. Isn't that amazing? I find it so anyway.

TOTAL OBEDIENCE

Lastly, there is this question of total obedience, and it is so important. Many Christians, especially men, have a problem of hearing the Lord. I do not know why but they do. Normally the ladies do not seem to have this problem, but the men do. "I have never heard the Lord. I do not expect Him to speak to me," someone said to me a few years ago. I said, "If you do not expect Him to speak to you, you will not hear Him." When the Lord Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice," He meant it. We should expect the Lord to speak to us. I know there are people who hear weird things that are not necessarily the Lord at all. Don't you think the Lord can protect you from other voices? Of course he can. This matter of hearing is important.

A Bondslave Forever

For instance, did you realize when the Lord gave the Ten Commandments as we call them, the ten words, He followed it with the story of the Jubilee year. He said, "If you have a bondslave in your home and he says, 'I love my master. I do not want to be free.'" Then the master would take him (Exodus 21) to the doorpost and with an awl put a hole in his ear." Although the Word of God does not tell us this, but the Talmud does is that a ring was put through his ear so everyone could see this person was his master's bondslave forever. Why do you think the Lord talked about the ear? Isn't the bondslave all to do with hands? Wouldn't it be better to put a ring on his finger so everyone could see that ring and know instantly he belongs to his lord? His hands are what he has to use all the time, preparing, cleaning, and building things, whatever else he had to do for his master. Or better still, shouldn't he have an chain around his ankle? You cannot do the will of God or the work of God, without feet. They carry you into doing it. You can argue forever what is the most important, the hands or the feet. If the feet are crippled, what can your hands do? The Lord Himself gave the order: "I do not want any ankle chain even if it is gold around my bondslave's ankle. I do not want a ring on his finger, I want his ear. If he cannot hear what I am saying, his service is of no use."

How can we be a link in the turning point of history if we have ears that do not hear the voice of the Master.

The Master Needs Redeemed Ears

Then again, we have the incredible story in the Old Testament of the cleansing of the leper and what he is to do. He is to go to the temple or to the tabernacle, and he is to see the priest. The priest will take the blood and put it on his ear, take the oil and put it on the ear, and his leprosy will be cleansed. Why the ear? Why not the big toe? Why not one of the fingers of the hand? It is almost as if the Lord is saying, "Yes, I need redeemed feet and I need redeemed hands, but if I do not have redeemed ears, it is all useless." There can be no service without an ear to hear.

You know very well when the Lord spoke to the seven churches, every single message ended with the same refrain: "He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." This ear of ours is the most important thing in overcoming. It is to hear the Lord and to obey the Lord.

We Can Only Obey What We Hear

Samuel really was a great servant of the Lord. In one place he said when he rebuked Saul, "Obedience is far more important than sacrifice." Remember that. If you do not hear the Lord, you rightfully do not need to obey him. But total obedience is the only way you and I will come through the days that lie ahead. But we will come through if we will hear Him and trust Him. We shall see the purpose of God finally fulfilled.

So Samuel stands like a great monolith to warn us that if we do not have total unconditional commitment to the Lord, we will fail. If we do not have total surrender of our will to His will, we will fail. If we do not have an ear to hear and to obey what we hear Him say, we will fail. May the Lord reach our hearts and touch us because we are now at one of these great turning points in history, and we need the Lord more than we have ever needed Him before. Thank you.