

CHILDREN'S GREAT BIBLE TEXTS

VOLUME VII



THE BOOK OF
SAMUEL

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THE BOOK OF SAMUEL

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The Book Of Samuel, J. Hastings
Jazzybee Verlag Jürgen Beck
86450 Altenmünster, Germany

ISBN: 9783849622275

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A LITTLE COAT.

His mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year. — 1 Sam. ii, 19 (AV).

Is there a boy or girl here who does not like to get new clothes ? Every girl is proud of her new dress, of her latest hat, even of her new boots. And I have known a little boy who, when he got a new jacket, asked his mother to allow it to lie on his pillow at night.

Your sermon this morning is about a boy's coat. And the owner of it was a little fellow named Samuel. He was the son of two plain people called Hannah and Elkanah, who lived at a place called Ramah. Hannah had prayed to God to send her a son, and had promised that if God granted her request she would give the boy to the Lord's service. And she really meant it. When a wee mite, Samuel was taken to Shiloh, and made a sort of errand boy in the House of the Lord,

What a quaint little figure he must have been ! He wore a linen robe called an ephod. It was the same as a priest's

dress, only, over the ephod, the priests had a rich flowing cloak, which was sometimes very beautiful. It was this upper coat that Hannah took to Samuel every year, and although he lived constantly beside an old priest named Eli, and was being taught to think of nothing but religion and God's word, Samuel could not change his nature. He was just a boy like any of you. Wouldn't he be proud of each new coat as it arrived ? And the thought that he was to see his mother would keep him from sleeping for nights before she came.

It is a beautiful touch in the story of Samuel's life this of his mother making the little coat that was like the big priest's one. It makes us think of the home at Ramah, and of the loving hearts there. Hannah could not buy the linen of which the coat was made. Each Israelite had to grow on his own farm what he needed for himself and his family, of food, and clothing, and fuel. Doubtless Elkanah sowed and reaped the flax which she span, and wove, and bleached into the linen web, out of which she shaped the little garment she took to Shiloh. And all the time she span and wove and cut and sewed her dreams would be of Samuel's future. Many a wish would she frame, and many a prayer would she utter, that the boy would grow up to serve God and his generation.

When Samuel grew to be a great man, do you think Hannah would be proud ? I believe, rather, she would be like the mother of David Livingstone, when at last the world acknowledged him a great man. A neighbour visiting her during her last illness said, "You'll be richt proud o' yer son noo, Agnes ? " to which she gave the unexpected reply, "I'm nae prouder o' him the day than when he put the first half-crown he ever earned into my lap." Hannah, we feel sure, never felt prouder of Samuel than she did when he was the little errand boy in the House of the Lord.

I wonder if Samuel had a little return gift ready for his mother when she came up each year. He would have no Saturday pennies to spend, but he would have treasures like every other boy that ever lived. I wonder if he offered her one of his treasures to show her how much he loved her for her loving thought of him. Perhaps he just took his mother's love for granted as did the little boy I read of the other day.

He was a little street urchin, and he asked a lady to give him a job. " I've got three pennies," he said, " but I want to earn a bit more."

" Yes," said she, " and what are you going to do with your money ? "

"Well," he replied (it was Christmas time), "I'm going to get some baccy for Dad, an' a tin 'orse for our li'l Bill, an' a sweet-stuff for Gladys."

" Ah ! " said the lady, " I see — some tobacco for your father, a tin horse for little Bill, and some sweets for Gladys. And what for your mother ? "

" Oh ! Muvver ! " he exclaimed, " she don't want anythink. Leastways" — and he paused — "she never asks for nuffin."

Boys and girls, do you take your mother's love as a matter of course ? Then remember this — there's nothing in the world quite like it. It gives, gives, gives, and asks for nothing. Yes, it asks for nothing, but it craves something all the same. It craves love in return. No gift you can bring your mother will be dearer to her than your love. And if that love is the right kind of love it cannot help showing itself in thoughtful deeds and loving words. Your mother

will notice these, she will treasure them more than the costliest gifts — though I hope you won't forget the gifts too.

There is only one love more wonderful and more unselfish than a mother's love. It, too, loves and gives, loves and forgives, again and again. It, too, yearns for love in return. What are you going to give God, boys and girls, for all He showers on you ? There is one priceless gift you can give Him — a gift that no money can buy. Will you take all and give nothing ? Or will you give Him the gift He longs for — your heart ?

THE CHILD-PROPHET.

And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the Lord, and also with men. — 1 Sam. ii. 26.

If you look carefully at the text you will see that it tells us three things about Samuel. First it tells us that he grew, next that he was in favour with God, and lastly that he was in favour with men.

1. " Samuel grew." He was just like other boys and girls. He grew in height. Year by year as Hannah brought him his new coat he would compare it with the old one to see how many inches he had grown. Some years the old one would seem shorter than usual because he had been growing faster. I wonder if he was ever measured against a wall or a door as we sometimes are, and if Eli kept a record of his height.

And then he grew in strength. Each year he was able to run faster and farther, and to do his work quicker and better. Sometimes, I daresay, he looked at his arms to see how

powerful the muscles were getting. He could lift heavier weights and throw farther and straighter than he used to do.

He grew in wisdom. That doesn't mean that he just grew in knowledge. You may fill your heads with all kinds of knowledge and yet be much less wise than you were to begin with. Samuel learned a lot of things from Eli, but he knew how to use what he had learned, and he thought out things for himself and gained in common sense.

But Samuel grew not only in body and mind, he grew also in heart and soul. There is no use growing at all if you don't grow the right way. Some people grow big bodies and large minds and little, deformed, ugly souls. They grow backwards instead of forwards, so that their friends say of them : " I wish they were small again. They were much nicer and much better then."

Samuel might easily have grown backwards instead of forwards. Perhaps we think that, living in the tabernacle with old Eli, he had no temptations and that it was easy for him to be good. But Eli was not the only man in the tabernacle. There were his two wicked sons Hophni and Phinehas. Samuel must have known something of their evil ways. Perhaps they laughed at him sometimes, and very likely they tried to tempt him to follow in their footsteps. But Samuel kept steadily on his own brave way. Day by day he grew into the great, wise, noble soul who was to rule and guide Israel, and then one night God spoke to him and all Israel knew that Samuel was a prophet.

2. Samuel was " in favour with God." God loves us all, even when we hurt and spurn Him, but I think He loves in a special kind of way those who love and try to follow Him. It is just as if they were His very, very own, given back to Him