

The Character of Samuel – Part 2

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John Wyndham wrote a novel in 1957 called, *The Midwich Cuckoos*, that was about a strange event that happened at a small village in England. For some reason, the women of this town become pregnant at the same time. They gave birth at the same time and all the children were different compared to the other children of that village. These different children had blonde hair and arresting eyes. They always stayed together, dressed nicely, and supported one another. They matured quicker than the other children to the point where they talked and acted as an adult, even though they were children. They also lacked compassion and love. They would show coldness to others resulting in the townspeople starting to develop a fear for these children. These children then developed the ability to read minds and make other people do things they wouldn't normally do. They were not obedient to their parents or any other type of authority. If you tried to correct them, they may have you kill yourself. This novel was made into a movie and I won't tell you the ending. We may say that these children sounded and acted like a lot of the children today. Many children today are not obedient to either their parents or to any other authority. Many of these children actually are just a copy of their own parents. Many adults today are not obedient to authority as well. I looked up the AI definition of "obedience" and I found this definition: the act or practice of yielding to explicit instructions, commands, or laws from an authority figure and involves submitting your will to a higher power, rule, or institution, and is typically driven by a sense of duty, respect, or a desire to avoid consequences. Now, we are starting a series about how our character can be salt and light in this evil world today. Today, we will start on what obedience looks like in our time period because obedience should be part of our character. I looked up the AI definition of character and it is this: refers to the core moral and ethical qualities that define a person. Part of someone's character is how they handle obedience. What does obedience mean for a follower of Jesus? This is an important question today because obedience can become very distorted. What do I mean by this? I'll use an old movie as an example. In the 1940 movie, *The Mortal Storm*, it tells the story of a family in Germany that becomes torn apart during the early part of Adolf Hitler's rule. Half of the family sided with Nazism and the other half believed in freedom of thought, which

Nazism did not believe in (Communism doesn't believe in it either). The brothers and a friend became part of the Nazism regime and they became strict followers or we can say they became very obedient to the Nazi cause to the point where they even turned away from their own family - they were told to denounce their family. The father would die in a prison camp and the sister would be shot and killed and yet, they remained obedient to the cause. So, obedience can be very dangerous and we're starting to see that today. The rise of socialism and communism, which is the harsh form of socialism, demands obedience from its followers. Nazism was a form of socialism. All these beliefs come from Marxism. They demand total obedience to their cause and if you disobey, you become the enemy and history tells us that millions of people have died because of their disobedience and their love for freedom. So, there is a dangerous side of obedience as well. So, let's explore more into this obedience topic.

Let's turn to 1 Samuel 1: 9 - 18. This story is about a poor lady, named Hannah, who wanted to have children, but was barren. So, Hannah and her husband went to Shiloh and the Tabernacle was stationed in the city at this time. So, Hannah made her journey to the Tabernacle and now let's see what happens in God's Holy Word, "9 Then Hannah got up after eating and drinking in Shiloh. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat by the doorpost of the ^[a]temple of the LORD. 10 She, ^[b]greatly distressed, prayed to the LORD and wept bitterly. 11 And she made a vow and said, "LORD of armies, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your bond-servant and remember me, and not forget Your bond-servant, but will give Your bond-servant a ^[c]son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and a razor shall never come on his head."

12 Now it came about, as she ^[d]continued praying before the LORD, that Eli was watching her mouth. 13 As for Hannah, she was speaking in her heart, only her lips were quivering, but her voice was not heard. So Eli thought that she was drunk. 14 Then Eli said to her, "How long will you behave like a drunk? Get rid of your wine!" 15 But Hannah answered and said, "No, my lord, I am a woman ^[e]despairing in spirit; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have poured out my soul before the LORD. 16 Do not ^[f]consider your bond-servant a useless woman, for I have spoken until now out of my great concern and provocation." 17 Then Eli answered and said, "Go in peace; and may the God of Israel grant your request that you have asked of Him." 18 She said, "Let your bond-servant find favor in your sight." So the woman went on her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad. (NASB – www.biblegateway.com)

Hannah's prayer was answered and she would give birth to a son and she named him Samuel. After Samuel was weaned (about 3 years old), she took Samuel to the Tabernacle and gave Samuel to the Lord. So, Samuel grew up helping Eli the priest at the Tabernacle. Now, let's continue with the story in 1 Samuel 3: 1-18, "3 Now the boy Samuel was attending to the service of the LORD before Eli. And word from the LORD was rare in those days; [a]visions were infrequent.

2 But it happened at that time as Eli was lying down in his place (now his eyesight had begun to be [b]poor *and* he could not see *well*), 3 and the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD where the ark of God was, 4 that the LORD called Samuel; and he said, "Here I am." 5 Then he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, go back *and* lie down." So he went and lay down. 6 And the LORD called yet again, "Samuel!" So Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son, go back *and* lie down." 7 Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, nor had the word of the LORD yet been revealed to him. 8 So the LORD called Samuel again for the third time. And he got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy. 9 And Eli said to Samuel, "Go lie down, and it shall be if He calls you, that you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for Your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

10 Then the LORD came and stood, and called as at *the* other times: "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for Your servant is listening." 11 Then the LORD said to Samuel, "Behold, I am going to do a thing in Israel, *and* both ears of everyone who hears *about* it will ring. 12 On that day I will carry out against Eli everything that I have spoken in regard to his house, from beginning to end. 13 For I have told him that I am going to judge his house forever for the wrongdoing that he knew, because his sons were bringing a curse on themselves and he did not rebuke them. 14 Therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the wrongdoing of Eli's house shall never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering."

15 So Samuel lay down until morning. Then he opened the doors of the house of the LORD. But Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. 16 Then Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son." And he said, "Here I am." 17 He said, "What is the word that He spoke to you? Please do not hide it from me. May God do the same to you, and more so, if you hide a *single* word from me of all the words that He

spoke to you!" ¹⁸ So Samuel told him ^[c]everything and hid nothing from him. And he said, "He is the LORD; let Him do ^[d]what seems good to Him." (NASB – www.biblegateway.com)

This story tells us that messages and visions were very rare during this time period. Some say this could mean it was very wicked times. As Samuel is sleeping near the Ark of God, God speaks to Samuel. Thinking that Eli is calling for him, Samuel "runs" to Eli to see what he wants. Eli tells him to go back to sleep since he was not the one calling Samuel. Three times this happens and each time Samuel responds to God's voice. We already see how obedient Samuel is. Three times Samuel goes to Eli thinking he is calling him. I would have gone once and that would have been it. Not Samuel. After the third time, Eli the priest understands that God must be calling Samuel, so Eli tells Samuel what to say when God calls him again. God tells Samuel that Eli's family will be punished and their sins not forgiven because of the sons' blasphemy against God and for Eli not disciplining his sons. Now, Scripture tells us that Samuel didn't want to tell Eli about what God had told him. However, Eli tells Samuel to tell him and Samuel is obedient and tells Eli everything. Then, Scripture tells us that God continues to give messages to Samuel in verse 21, because of Samuel's obedience. We see here that Samuel is very obedient not just to Eli, but to God as well. You see obedience is a very important part of a Christian's character. We are to be obedient to God, which should help us to understand better what it means to be obedient in the world we live in now. Samuel would have to deal with this later when he had to deal with Israel's first king – King Saul. King Saul had a hard time being obedient to God. We read this in 1 Samuel 15: 22 – 23, "²² But Samuel replied,

"What is more pleasing to the LORD:

your burnt offerings and sacrifices

or your obedience to his voice?

Listen! Obedience is better than sacrifice,

and submission is better than offering the fat of rams.

²³ Rebellion is as sinful as witchcraft,

and stubbornness as bad as worshipping idols.

So because you have rejected the command of the LORD,

he has rejected you as king." (NLT – www.biblegateway.com)

The Lord rejected King Saul because of his lack of obedience to God. Saul pleased himself. Saul's obedience was more important to God than his offerings and sacrifices. However, we have to be careful here. In the New Testament, Jesus had to deal a lot with the Pharisees. These were men who made sure the Jews obeyed the laws of God and the laws the Pharisees had added on to make sure the people didn't stray away from God. Many of their laws caused a heavy burden upon these people. The Pharisees were very obedient to the law of God and their own laws. We can read one of Jesus' meetings with them in John 5: 39 – 43, ³⁹ "You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me! ⁴⁰ Yet you refuse to come to me to receive this life.

⁴¹ "Your approval means nothing to me, ⁴² because I know you don't have God's love within you. ⁴³ For I have come to you in my Father's name, and you have rejected me. Yet if others come in their own name, you gladly welcome them. ⁴⁴ No wonder you can't believe! For you gladly honor each other, but you don't care about the honor that comes from the one who alone is God. (NLT – www.biblegateway.com)

Jesus states this to the Pharisees in Luke 5: 42, ⁴² "What sorrow awaits you Pharisees! For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest income from your herb gardens,^[a] but you ignore justice and the love of God. You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things. (NLT – www.biblegateway.com)

The Pharisees were obedient to the law, but they had no love for God and the people. You see, we can't be obedient to God without His love flowing through us because we'll just become like the Pharisees. In fact, we'll become like those who were so obedient to the Nazi cause we talked about earlier, but had no love whatsoever. The Pharisees were always walking around looking to find people disobeying the rules. The Church has always had Pharisees and we still have them today who make sure people are obedient to God, but they lack the love and compassion of Jesus. You see, Jesus is our model when it comes to obedience. Paul tells us this about Jesus and obedience in Philippians 2: 5 – 8, ⁵ "You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

⁶ Though he was God,^[a]

he did not think of equality with God
as something to cling to.

⁷ Instead, he gave up his divine privileges^[b];

he took the humble position of a slave^[c]
and was born as a human being.
When he appeared in human form,^[d]
⁸ he humbled himself in obedience to God
and died a criminal's death on a cross. (NLT – www.biblegateway.com)

Jesus was obedient to His Father out of love for Him. Jesus tells us this in John 14: 21, “²¹ Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. And because they love me, my Father will love them. And I will love them and reveal myself to each of them.” (NLT – www.biblegateway.com)

We are obedient out of love for Jesus. In other words, Jesus' love has to be blended into our obedience to God. When this happens, then our obedience we show in this world will be through love as well because if we love God first, then we can love people second including ourselves in the correct and holy way. Jesus adds onto this in John 14: 15, “¹⁵ “If you love me, obey^[a] my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate,^[b] who will never leave you. ¹⁷ He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn't looking for him and doesn't recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you. (NLT – www.biblegateway.com)

The Holy Spirit can help us to be obedient with His love mixed in so we don't become hard and cruel. So, when we deal with other followers of Jesus, we show obedience through love. We treat those around us with respect instead of being like a Pharisee who watched those around them and made sure everyone else was obedient void of love and compassion. You see, the world needs this type of obedience – that is mixed with the love of Jesus. It isn't rigid and hateful. This is what makes us different from the world. The Pharisees were like the world around them – cold hearted like those children in the movie and novel at the beginning of the sermon. Obedient to a cause, but no love for people. It all starts with being obedient to God out of love with the help of the Holy Spirit. God is looking for those who want to follow Jesus' character of obedience through Godly love. We need to ask Jesus to help us to be obedient to Him in this world and the Holy Spirit will help us to be better salt and light through goodness, love, and obedience to God. Plus, Jesus' love through obedience will help us to see the evil of obedience through Marxism, Socialism, and Communism of today. Are you obedient through the love of Jesus Christ?