

“The Call of Samuel”
1 Samuel 3:1-10
(Preached at Trinity, June 12, 2016)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we enter the heart of **Chapter 3** our attention is turned to the young man Samuel. So far we’ve seen him as a remarkable child. His mother dedicated him to God before he was even conceived.
1 Samuel 1:11 NAU - "O LORD of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and a razor shall never come on his head."
2. Hannah indeed had a son and she kept her vow. As soon as he was weaned she brought him to the Temple. Everything we know about him as a child is that of piety.
1 Samuel 2:11 NAU - "But the boy ministered to the LORD before Eli the priest."
1 Samuel 2:18 NAU - "Now Samuel was ministering before the LORD, as a boy wearing a linen ephod."
1 Samuel 2:21 NAU - "And the boy Samuel grew before the LORD."
1 Samuel 3:1 NAU - "Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD before Eli."
3. Samuel was a rare child. William Blaikie:
“He was manifestly one of those who are sanctified from infancy, and whose hearts go from the first with sacred duties. There were no wayward impulses to subdue, no hankerings after worldly freedom and worldly enjoyments; there was no necessity for coercive measures, either to restrain him from outbursts of frivolity or to compel him to diligence and regularity in his calling. From the first he looked with solemn awe and holy interest on all that related to the worship of God.”
4. Samuel was dedicated and called from a child.
 - David claimed this call of God upon his own life.
Psalms 22:10 NAU - "You have been my God from my mother's womb."
 - Again, we can see it in the call of Jeremiah
Jeremiah 1:5 NAU - "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, And before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations."
5. By now Samuel was no longer a small child. A child would not have been entrusted with opening the doors of the Tabernacle.
1 Samuel 3:15 NAU - "So Samuel lay down until morning. Then he opened the doors of the house of the LORD."
6. We continue to see the excellent character of this young man. We see his piety as a servant of God, faithfully fulfilling his duties. We must also admire his faithfulness and submission to Eli. As he is awakened from sleep with a voice calling his name he immediately rises and goes to the side of Eli, “Here am I.” How different this is from Eli’s own sons who continually ignored the voice of their father.

7. In this chapter we find God's call upon Samuel as His prophet. Samuel is one of the few in Scripture to hold to all three of God's offices—the office of prophet, priest, and king. Later separate individuals would hold these offices.
- A. Moses also held this distinction –
 As prophet he served as God's spokesman to Israel
 As priest he served as mediator and intercessor for Israel
 As king he served as Israel's mighty leader long before Israel had a monarchy
- B. Samuel served in the office of a priest to Israel.
 He served as the last of the judges – fulfilling the role of king.
 Here in **Chapter 3** we find God's call upon Samuel to the office of prophet.
8. We are witnessing God's call upon the life of Samuel. As testimony to the scarcity of God's Word in these days, Samuel had never heard the voice of God. Since he had never heard it he didn't recognize it. And apart from the knowledge of God's Word one cannot truly be said to know God.
1 Samuel 3:7 NAU - "Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, nor had the word of the LORD yet been revealed to him."
10. But this was about to change. God was about to call Samuel by name.
11. We continue to see God's calling upon the lives of His people today.
 There are certain elements that we find whenever God places His call upon the life of an individual. We can find it here as God's calls Samuel as His prophet.
 Tonight I want to look at these elements in the call of Samuel and then look at them generally in God's calling upon us unto salvation.
 I'll also apply the call of God upon Samuel's life to the pastoral call today.
- I. It was a personal call
- A. Samuel was called by name –
1 Samuel 3:4 NAU - "the LORD called Samuel; and he said, "Here I am."
 1. **Verse 1** tells us that this was a period when God's voice was seldom heard
1 Samuel 3:1 NAU - "And word from the LORD was rare in those days, visions were infrequent."
 a. It is a great judgment from God when people are left to wander without a clear Word from God.
 b. But God was about to raise up a prophet who He would use as a clear voice to Israel.
2. Samuel was in a deep slumber and was awakened by a voice
 The voice was calling his name.
1 Sam 3:4 - "the LORD called Samuel; and he said, "Here I am."
3. No one else was present. No one else heard God's voice. This was for Samuel alone. Samuel was God's man
- B. This is true regarding our call to salvation – It is a personal call.
 1. God chose us particularly before the world began
2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 NAS - "But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. ¹⁴ And it was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

2. God sent Jesus to die for us particularly
Matthew 1:21 NAU - "And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins."
John 10:11 NAU - "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep."
 3. This is God's call upon our lives unto salvation – it is a personal call
Romans 8:30 NAU - " and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified."
 4. This is why there is such power in the Gospel of Christ. God is saving His own. It calls us powerfully, personally, particularly.
- C. But God also calls particular people to particular callings
1. This is true of the pastoral call.
 2. God raises up particular men to serve in the office of pastor. No man has the right to put himself into the ministry.
 3. To guard against men entering the office who have not been called God sets forth a standard or qualifications for office.
 4. It is also true that we should see our particular situation of life in terms of vocation—God's personal call upon our lives.

II. It was a persistent call

- A. God called Samuel's name three times, "Samuel, Samuel"
1. The verb "call" is found 11 times in verse 4-10.
 2. God persisted in His call upon Samuel continued until he responded. It isn't that God's call wasn't clear. The problem was with Samuel's ability to comprehend.
1 Samuel 3:7 NAU - "Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, nor had the word of the LORD yet been revealed to him."
 3. Finally, the fourth time Samuel responded, "Speak, for Your servant is listening"
- B. Our call to salvation is persistent and effectual
1. We may flee but God will find us
 2. God's word to Paul:
Acts 26:14 NAU - "It is hard for you to kick against the goads."
 3. The conviction of sin has been called a bloodhound. It lays hold of the conscience until we cry out for relief. But it may go on for many months or even years.
 David Brainerd – "At the age of seven David began to seek the Lord. His journal shows that he struggled greatly in coming to Christ. To replace self-righteous works by faith seemed to him very difficult to do. He found it hard to prefer God's glory over his own salvation. This lasted for years. Finally, he found peace as at the age of 21. He wrote in his journal: "One morning while I was walking in a solitary place (as usual) and came near a thick bunch of hazels, I felt at once unusually lost and at the greatest stand and felt that all my contrivances and projections respecting my deliverance and salvation were brought to a final issue."
 Finally, three days later:
 "By this time the sun was scarce half an hour high, as I remember, as I was walking in a dark thick grove, "unspeakable glory" seemed to open to

the view and apprehension of my soul. It was a new inward apprehension or view that I had of God; such as I never had before, nor anything that I had the least remembrance of it. I stood still and wondered and admired."

<http://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/1701-1800/sterling-conversion-of-david-brainerd-11630231.html>

- C. This is also true to the pastoral call
1. I know of few pastors who did not struggle against God's call. It was relentless. And then finally we surrender to God's call and still we struggle with our unworthiness and insufficiency.
 2. But God doesn't allow His servant to escape His call.

III. It was a perplexing call

- A. Samuel was stirred by what he heard
1. At first he didn't recognize God's voice. The call in the middle of the night was most confusing to Samuel.
 2. This wasn't nearly as perplexing as the message he received.
1 Samuel 3:11 NAU - "Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel at which both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle."
 3. God told Samuel of the utter rejection of the house of Eli
1 Samuel 3:14 NAU - "I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever."
 4. After hearing the message from God Samuel laid sleepless upon his bed. He was terrified at the thought of revealing what he heard to Eli.
1 Sam 3:15 NAU - "But Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli."
 5. Samuel not only received God's Word, he also had to speak it
- B. God's call to salvation is also perplexing to many
1. God's call to absolute submission is more than many are willing to give
Matthew 19:21-22 NAU - "Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." ²² But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property."
2 Timothy 4:10 NAU - "Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica"
Matthew 13:22 NAU - "And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful."
 2. The Gospel is a difficult message, both to preach and to receive. It is a message of condemnation before it becomes a message of joy. It is a message that requires a sinner to confess his sin and humble himself before God. He must confess his helplessness.
 3. The way of salvation is a narrow way. It is the way of self-denial. It is the way of following Christ, even unto death.

- C. The pastoral call is also perplexing
1. It is a high calling with many demands
 2. Spurgeon – “Any Christian has a right to disseminate the gospel who has the ability to do so; and more, he not only has the right, but it is his duty to so do as long as he lives. The propagation of the gospel is left, not to a few, but to all the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ... I do not, however, in this lecture allude to the occasional preaching, or any other form of ministry common to all the saints, but to the work and office of the bishopric, in which is included both teaching and bearing rule in the church, which requires the dedication of a man’s entire life to spiritual work.”
 3. The pastoral ministry demands the endless watching over souls. It demands the careful study of Scripture. It demands the proclamation of the Gospel message which has always been offensive to men. There is always the temptation to soften the Gospel’s message of condemnation. Richard Phillips – “Some Christians misguidedly believe that if they downplay the Bible’s denunciation of sin, they are being more humble and winsome and are making it easier for people to embrace Christ as their Savior. To the contrary: to remove the Bible’s message of God’s wrath on sin is arrogantly to tamper with the message that God has entrusted to us and coldheartedly to withhold from sinners a truth that they must embrace in order to be saved. Withholding the Bible’s message of sin and judgment renders meaningless the message of the cross.”
 4. However, if the pastor only sounds the alarm of judgment without the sweet balm of Gospel grace and forgiveness through a loving Savior he has still withheld the substance of the Gospel.
 5. God’s call to faithfulness to His Word is always hard; often perplexing. Dale Ralph Davis – “Samuel’s call highlights the burden, pressure, conflict, and pain of the word of God. No sooner is Samuel called to the prophetic task than he finds how difficult and heart-rending it can be¹
 6. Eli’s warning to Samuel must be heard by every pastor
1 Samuel 3:17 NAU - "What is the word that He spoke to you? Please do not hide it from me. May God do so to you, and more also, if you hide anything from me of all the words that He spoke to you."

IV. It was a powerful call

- A. God’s call upon Samuel’s life included God’s enablement
1. Samuel was empowered for the work
1 Samuel 3:19 NAU - "Thus Samuel grew and the LORD was with him and let none of his words fail."
 2. God authenticated Samuel’s words and empowered him to speak them boldly.

¹ Davis, D. R. (2000). *1 Samuel: Looking on the Heart* (p. 47). Scotland: Christian Focus Publications.

3. Samuel would be the first in a long line of prophets who stood boldly before kings. Only God's powerful hand upon them would give them the courage to stand. God would say to Ezekiel:
Ezekiel 3:8-9 NAU - "Behold, I have made your face as hard as their faces and your forehead as hard as their foreheads. ⁹ "Like emery harder than flint I have made your forehead. Do not be afraid of them or be dismayed before them, though they are a rebellious house."
 4. All Israel would know that Samuel was now God's prophet
1 Samuel 4:1 NAU - "Thus the word of Samuel came to all Israel."
- B. What a testimony of God's grace in our life that we persevere
1. The power of God is upon us
 2. The testimony of every Christian is, "He is able!"
2 Timothy 1:12 NAU - " For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day."
 3. God preserves us by His mighty hand
 4. God also give us power over sin. Sin no longer has dominion over us
Romans 6:17-18 NAU - "But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, ¹⁸ and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness."
- C. God empowers pastors to conduct their ministry
1. He gives the giftedness to watch over the souls of men, to teach His Word, to administrate His church.
 2. He also gives the courage to stand before men, even during hostile times
Paul told Pastor Timothy: **2 Timothy 1:7 ESV** - " for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control."

Conclusion:

1. Not many have received a call from God like Samuel—an audible voice. But every Christian has received a powerful call to turn from our sins and trust Christ with our lives.
2. The simple truth is this. We no longer are to expect an audible voice. God no longer speaks in that manner. But we have a clear voice from the Word of God. When we approach the Bible do we say in our hearts, "Speak, for Your servant is listening"
3. Are you willing to do what God wants you to do, go where He wants you to go, speak what He wants you to speak?
4. His call upon your life is personal, persistent, perplexing, and powerful. God calls each of us to a life of service to Him. Too often professing Christians are characterized by half-hearted commitment to Christ. His call upon each of us is undivided commitment – personal, persistent, perplexing, and powerful. Whatever He calls you to give up for His sake is small compared with the glory of our reward.
Mark 10:29-30 NAU - "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, ³⁰ but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life."