

Broomfield



# PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH MINISTRY OF THE WORD

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## Compulsion to Serve

### *The Attributes of a Prophetic Call, Part 7*

It is true that the highest and most fundamental call in the Kingdom of God is Love for the Lord.

Matthew 22:35-38, “Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law?”

“Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.”

Truly, there is no higher call. And thus Paul speaking of why he and Timothy did the things they did said, “For the love of Christ constraineth us” (2 Corinthians 5:14). Truly there could be no higher motive for service in God's Kingdom.

When it comes to life as Kingdom citizens, the compelling factor in all that we do must be love for the Lord! And yet that is not to say that there are not other valid reasons for service — such as love for man.

Romans 9:1-3, “I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:”

Another valid reason for service is compassion.

Luke 10:33-34, “But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.”

Another reason for service is the desire to be a blessing to another individual.

2 Corinthians 1:3 - 4, “Blessed be God . . . who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.”

There is no question that along with love for God, there are many reasons which might compel us to serve in the Kingdom of God. We are looking at a passage which details three reasons for why Samuel exercised his gifts and calling- and thus three reasons for why we ought to fulfill the call placed on our life. Recall that Samuel here is a boy given a man's message. At first blush, he didn't want to minister — he was afraid.<sup>1</sup> And yet three things were brought to his attention which compelled him to serve.

## Relationships

Aside from a love for God, let's consider three reasons that ought to compel us to minister in God's Kingdom. Notice the first reason given in our text is based upon relationships.

1 Samuel 3:16, “Then Eli called Samuel, and said, Samuel, my son. And he answered, Here am I.”

Family of God as we read this verse we must bear in mind the context. From verse 15 we saw the temptations that undoubtedly will arise in ministry — specifically the temptation to postpone our service, bury it in the mundane, and shrink back because of our fear of man.

Again, we saw that these were the temptations to which Samuel succumbed. We saw a tentative prophet holding back, avoiding and ignoring the call of God. Yet, now in verse 18 we read this: “And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him” (1 Samuel 3:18).

What made the difference?

How is it that in verse 15 Samuel is doing everything he could to avoid facing Eli, but then in verse 18 Samuel boldly and thoroughly proclaimed God's message?

The answer to these questions is found in verse 16.

1 Samuel 3:16, “Then Eli called Samuel, and said, Samuel, my son. And he answered, Here am I.”

This is the second time Eli called Samuel his son.<sup>2</sup> And Samuel answers Eli by saying, “Here I am.”

Do you see it?

That which compelled Samuel in his calling was the personal relationship that he had with Eli. It was as he was Eli's son! How could he NOT proclaim the message?

And this illustrates the first source of compulsion when it comes to exercising our gifts and calling: The personal relationships that we have with people. It is these relationships which drive us unto service.

And this raises a very important question: Outside of the familial bond, what relationship do you have that is compelling you to serve?

My guess is that very few of us will be able to mention any. Our American culture leads many of us to superficiality in our dealings with others. In our culture we are human-doings before we are human beings. And so if it doesn't benefit us in some way, or make our lives easier, or enables us to be more

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<sup>1</sup> Compare 1 Samuel 3:15

<sup>2</sup> Compare 1 Samuel 3:6

productive then we typically ignore the relationship.

This has resulted in the church simply becoming another charitable organization. It is an organization that we join for the purpose of self-gratification. And thus rather than really caring for each other as God intended for us to do<sup>3</sup> we look around and label one another and use that to determine how close we'll get.

- That's a loser.
- She's not nice.
- He's a brat.
- They're cold.
- Write off each other.
- Ignore the one that hasn't much to offer.
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And yet what if I told you that

- That “loser” was going to save your life one day?
- That so-called “brat” was going to marry your son or daughter?
- That the one you despise is the only one who will minister to you when you are on your death-bed?

It changes everything — the knowledge of a relationship.

Well brothers and sisters — I've got news for you we are a family! The relationships that are in this room are going to transcend eternity! On Judgment Day you will be held accountable for this body and so behold your sons, daughters, brothers, and sisters!

## Need to Know

As you and I come to understand and embrace this, truly the temptation to postpone our service, bury it in the mundane, and shrink back on account of the fear of man will evaporate. And yet there is more we are also compelled to minister on account of their need to know.

1 Samuel 3:17, “**And he said<sup>4</sup>, What is the thing that the LORD hath said unto thee? I pray thee hide it not from me:** God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide any thing from me of all the things that he said unto thee.”

This is an intense entreaty made by Eli. Psalm 118:25 uses the same language when the Psalmist cried “O Lord, do save, we beseech<sup>5</sup> Thee” (Psalm 118:25). In fact, it is this word that was quoted in Matthew 21:9 during the Triumphal Entry where the crowds cried out “Hosanna<sup>6</sup> to the Son of David”

The word “Hosanna” is a combination of the entire supplication in Ps. 118:25a: “HO”- O Lord- “SA”- do save- “NA”- we beg you, we beseech you!

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<sup>3</sup> Compare the primary sins listed in the Major and Minor Prophets: Not caring for the poor, not helping the widow and helpless, etc.

<sup>4</sup> אָמַר ‘amar

<sup>5</sup> אָנָּא ‘anna’

<sup>6</sup> ὁσαυτα hosanna from the Hebrew אָנָּא na

It is the latter part — the na' — that is used in our text here. It speaks of an intense longing or an urgent entreaty. From this we conclude that when Eli approached Samuel, he did so with an intensity that Samuel probably had never seen before. Eli longed to hear the message of the Lord for he was desperate; he had to know for his life depended on it!

Now again, it is this that broke the hesitancy that Samuel felt when it came to ministering in God's Kingdom. As Samuel watched his father figure beg him for the message, Samuel's heart melted such that again, "Samuel told him everything and held nothing from him" (1 Samuel 3:18b).

From this we see the second compulsion that leads to service in God's Kingdom — the knowledge that what we possess via the gifts and calling of the Lord is that which each of us need!

Did you get that?

God has placed you in this body because we need you!

1 Corinthians 12:7, "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."

The gifts that you possess as a child of God have been given NOT to enable you to get a better job or advance you in life. Gifts are given to minister to your brothers and sisters in Christ!

In fact, Peter couldn't have been more clear.

1 Peter 4:10, "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

Our call is to use our gifts to serve the body of Christ! In fact as we do so, notice the result.

Ephesians 4:16, "From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

We have been placed in this body and on this planet that we might be used of God to attend to the needs of those around us! Where we refuse to serve or shrink back to safety, the body is harmed! In fact, a great example of our true situation is as the four lepers of 2 Kings 7.

## **Four Lepers**

The siege of Samaria led to cannibalism inside the city. It was a very desperate situation. In fact four men, lepers, discussed their plight.

2 Kings 7:3-5, "And there were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate: and they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die? If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die.

"Then they said one to another, We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come,

that we may go and tell the king's household. So they came and called unto the porter of the city: and they told them, saying, We came to the camp of the Syrians, and, behold, there was no man there, neither voice of man, but horses tied, and asses tied, and the tents as they were."

These four men then made an incredible discovery.

2 Kings 7:“6-10And they rose up in the twilight, to go unto the camp of the Syrians: and when they were come to the uttermost part of the camp of Syria, behold, there was no man there. For the Lord had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host: and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us.

“Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even the camp as it was, and fled for their life. And when these lepers came to the uttermost part of the camp, they went into one tent, and did eat and drink, and carried thence silver, and gold, and raiment, and went and hid it; and came again, and entered into another tent, and carried thence also, and went and hid it.

“So they came and called unto the porter of the city: and they told them, saying, We came to the camp of the Syrians, and, behold, there was no man there, neither voice of man, but horses tied, and asses tied, and the tents as they were. And he called the porters; and they told it to the king's house within.”

This is such a beautiful picture of our relationship with one another and this world. Truly to most we are as lepers — despised, neglected, overlooked, and therefore inconsequential. And yet we have been entrusted NOT only with the message of life BUT gifts and a calling whereby we might be a blessing.

Now, the wealthy, self-assured, and the one who seemingly has his life together — are they not dying of a spiritual famine? Accordingly

- Don't you see the need?
- Don't you see that people in and out of this body are dying?
- Don't you realize that you have been given the gifts to help them?

And yet we are so apt to do our thing from Sunday to Sunday giving very little thought to the fact that God placed you in this body to serve it!

Oh, how can we be so heartless? How can we ignore each other when we have the ability to minister to the need? How can we go back to everyday life knowing that what this body needs today is you and your gifts?

Samuel couldn't! And nor should we.

To turn a blind eye toward the hurting and helpless, or take as opposed to give — as did the lepers at first — is to forsake this body and its Lord! Indeed! Allow the needs of this body to prick your heart and impel you to service.

## **Encumbrances**

And yet there is another source of compulsion when it comes to service: The encumbrances that come with word.

1 Samuel 3:17, “And he said, What is the thing that the LORD hath said unto thee? I pray thee hide it not from me: **God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide any thing from me of all the things that he said unto thee.**”

This is a strong statement almost amounting to a curse. “Samuel, if you don't fulfill your call, may God discipline you as He has me!” And such would be the case if Samuel proved unfaithful. And so it is in our life as well. If we refuse to use the gifts that God has given us, we too will be disciplined! Now as shocking as this may be, we must bear in mind that the message of judgment that Eli has received in both this and the last chapter was an oracle given to a child of God! Not only was Eli part of the identified people of God he also served as the High Priest of Israel. So he ministered to God. He served God in His temple. And he interceded on behalf of God's people. But as we have seen, he also knew the grace of God whereby he received mercy even in the midst of judgment.

1 Samuel 2:33 (NASB), “Yet I will not cut off every man of yours from My altar that your eyes may fail from weeping and your soul grieve, and all the increase of your house will die in the prime of life.”

Recall that this would not have been bad news to Eli, but a statement of mercy to a burdened saint. Though Eli sinned horribly, nevertheless God would bless His people with a faithful High Priest which we saw ultimately was in reference to Christ.

Upon hearing the word of God, Eli's faith was seen.

1 Samuel 3:18, “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 thus when we consider the judgment that Eli received in this text, we understand this as the disciplining hand of a loving God.

You say, “But, it is so brutal and harsh!”

And indeed it is. But isn't that what God Himself promises when it comes to the rearing of His children?

Hebrews 12:11, “Now no chastening<sup>7</sup> for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”

The word *chastening* is one of the harsher words in the Bible for a spanking. Far from the misguided opinions of the “professionals” who claim that spanking will damage a child, God spans His children!

Does God spank His children because He loses control and cannot help it?

Hebrews 12:7, “If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?”

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<sup>7</sup> παιδεία paideia

This text is amazing. What it is saying is that in order for us as God's people to flourish in our walks we need discipline! And such is the case in life.

If one takes a butterfly from its cocoon it will die. The struggle to get out of the cocoon is what enables the insect to live. It is the micro-tearing of the muscle fiber that enables ones muscles to strengthen.

Thus, do you understand that if it wasn't for God's disciplining grace, we would not survive? Stand? Grow in our walks? See heaven?

Thus we understand that the discipline of the Lord, though hard and difficult, nevertheless is administered by the loving hand of God.

This is why “God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons” (Hebrews 12:7-8 NASB).

The fact that Eli was disciplined in this passage does NOT lead us to the conclusion that he wasn't God's child — BUT just the opposite. Eli was disciplined because he was God's child.

Now this is an important truth as we consider the third reason for why we ought to prove faithful to God's Kingdom. If we refuse to serve, we too will be disciplined!

Eli knew this — as the past two chapters are a declaration of the ramifications of his abuse. He was/is living proof. Ezekiel knew this truth.

Ezekiel 33:7-8, “So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.”

And now Samuel would know it too. If he refused to minister, he would suffer the same fate as Eli.

And this highlights the final Compulsion mentioned in this text when it comes to the call of God. If we refuse to use the gifts and callings of the Lord, we will be disciplined.

But again we must not interpret this as a bad thing- but a good thing!

- What concert pianist isn't grateful that they were forced to practice?
- What teacher isn't glad that at some point they were forced to learn?
- What soldier isn't thankful for their training?
- What mother isn't grateful for the labor that births a child?
- What Christian doesn't look back with gladness upon the growth that was produced through past difficulty?

Truly, It is on account of discipline that we endure.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Compare Hebrews 12:7

James 1:2-4, “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”

Romans 5:3-5, “And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.”

And so, if we

- Refuse to serve.
- Take the gifts of the Lord and bury them.
- Trample underfoot the calling of the Lord.

We will be disciplined. NOT because we have angered God and now He is getting even! BUT because God loves us and will not allow us to remain as babes in the Lord.

But brothers and sisters, I would that we would avoid the discipline that comes on account of irresponsibility. Accordingly as a church, let us NOT bury or talent, avoid the use of our gifts, and put off the service to which we have been called today. Rather, let us actively serve in the Kingdom.

You say

- “But I’m so sinful and weak!”
- “I have nothing to offer!”

## **Confidence in Christ**

I want to close by referencing the words of Paul as he considered his call to the ministry.

1 Corinthians 15:9-10, “For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”

As one of the most active and fearless ministers in the Kingdom of God, Paul served on account three things. First, he had an accurate view of himself which led him to rely only upon the grace of God. This is why he said, “but by the grace of God I am what I am” (1 Corinthians 15:10).

Secondly, he didn’t serve because he was self-deceived, thinking that on account of his past he had something to offer, but because of the truth, he had nothing to offer on account of his sin. And yet, God had forgiven him! It is only as he relied upon Christ and His grace that he had the confidence to serve. He says this plainly by stating “His grace bestowed upon me was not in vain.”

In other words, instead of looking upon his sordid past and concluding that he had nothing to offer, Paul looked upon the cross and knew that God had much to offer through him. He knew that God had chosen him and equipped him, therefore he served by the grace of God!

Thirdly, Paul surpassed all of the other apostle’s labor not in his own strength, but only by the grace of



God. “But I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”

Paul relied upon Christ with the knowledge that God would use him as He saw fit. Thereby he knew that he could not fail — even if what he did resulted in “earthly failure” (like winding up in jail). Paul tirelessly served because He knew God was going to do something through him.

Family of God, such is the confidence that we have when it comes to ministry! God is ever and always pleased with us AND is going to use us — no matter what! We can rely upon God’s grace. Let us therefore serve this family that we love. Let us serve this family that needs our labor. Otherwise, rather than knowing the joy of labor in Christ, we will know the sorrow of God’s discipline.

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## **About the Preacher**

Greg Thurston preached this sermon on September 4, 2005. Greg is the Preacher at Broomfield Presbyterian Church.