



Samuel's Reformation and Restoration

Lesson Aim: To note that into the night of confusion God raises a voice with humble conviction and righteous principles, which two characteristics are bases for reformation: Samuel the last Judge.

L13. Text: 1 Samuel 3:10-21. **Date:** June 1959. **Topic:** Samuel: Calling of.

Today, we study concerning the last judge and the first prophet. This man is Samuel. God used him to judge Israel, to anoint two kings, to establish a school for the prophets, and other remarkable contributions to the religious life of Israel.

Samuel was the firstborn son of very devout parents, Elkanah and Hannah. For some years Hannah had been barren. She went annually with Elkanah to the tabernacle at Shiloh where Eli was priest. Each year she was distressed over her barrenness that she could not eat but spent her time in prayer for a child. She told Eli the burden of her heart and he assured her that her prayer for a son would be answered. In due time the child was born to Hannah and she named him Samuel (that is, "asked of God").

Hannah did not return to the tabernacle with the child until he was weaned (possibly about three years of age). Then she brought him and dedicated him to the Lord, leaving him at the tabernacle. Each year, when she went up to worship, Hannah would take a new coat for her son. Coming from such a devout background, trained under such a worthy leader, and being reared in such sacred surroundings, it is little wonder that there was created in Samuel's heart an attitude of readiness to respond to God's call.

The key to his life may well be found in his mother's words: "*For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him; Therefore also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord,*" 1 Samuel 1:27-28.

EXPOSITION

I. God Personally Calls His Ministers, 3:1-4.

1. He often calls those already busy in religious duties, verse 1. The young boy, Samuel, was soon assigned tasks to perform about the tabernacle. Many tasks of a menial nature had to be tended to and the child must have been a great help to Eli. As he grew older the tasks naturally became more serious and more demanding. When he appears in this verse (3:1) it is said that he “*ministered unto the Lord before Eli.*” Formerly, it was said he “*ministered before the Lord, being a child,*” I Samuel 2:18. The change from ministering before the lord to his ministering unto the Lord seems to say his tasks were more important and significant. One so reared and already busy in the things of God’s service could be an effective servant where he was. It is often the Lord’s way, however, to take those who show a loyalty in service and promote them to more responsible positions. Thus many teachers have become deacons, while many deacons have become ministers, and many ministers have become leaders of their brethren in the denomination. In this manner, young Samuel was called from service about the tabernacle to become a prophet. Let no one be satisfied with the service he now renders if the Lord calls to a different and more responsible position. It is a compliment for God to call you to a place of service. It is often those who are busiest who are given new tasks.

2. He often calls in times of religious crisis, verse 1. The apostasy of Israel had again closed heaven against her. It was only rarely that a man was inspired by a word from the Lord and no one had visions from the Lord any more. It was a time of spiritual crisis because the nation was estranged from God and no one was there to lead them back to Him. Yet, such times of spiritual drought is the time when God’s greatest men appear. Abraham was called when all the world forgot God. Moses was called when Israel desperately needed a leader. Each judge was called when the enemy grievously oppressed the nation. The great prophets of the eighth century B.C. (Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah) arose when the nation had turned to idols and false prophets abounded everywhere. Jeremiah was there to direct the nation to God when the Southern Kingdom fell before the enemy. Thank God for such occasions of crisis if they call us back to Him.

3. He often calls at unexpected times, verses 2-3. It seemed God would have called His next great prophet at a time of great emotional crisis. Perhaps it would be at a Passover observance or on the Day of Atonement. But God prefers to call His man in the night hour. At the time when all others were gone and the individual lay alone before God. Elijah learned, many years after, that God does not always speak through that means which

impresses the physical senses—the storm, the earthquake, the fire. God often speaks through a still, small voice which is heard only with the spiritual ears of a man's soul. I Kings 19:11-12. The call may come for us in the day or night, at church or away, in early years or in later years. The call may well come at an unexpected time but that does not keep us from recognizing it as the call of God. When God calls, be it soon or late, who can fail to answer, "Here am I!"

4. He always calls His chosen one personally, verse 4. When God called the young boy, he called him by name, "Samuel." So real and so personal was that call that Samuel arose to go and ask if Eli had called him. The call of God is not a figment of the imagination. It is as real as any other experience a man has. A man is called into Christian service of the ministry, or music, or education by the deliberate choice of God. Amos tells of how God laid a call upon him while he was tending his flock and it was such a call he could not resist it, Amos 7:14-16. Hosea's call came through a tragedy in his home when his wife deserted him and he saw thereby how Israel had deserted God, Hosea 1:2-9; 3:1-5. Isaiah's call came by a vision in the temple and an audible voice, Isaiah 6:1-8. Jeremiah tells us that God had chosen him to be a prophet before he was ever born, Jeremiah 1:5. The Lord informs us that Paul's ministry was set out for him before he was ever baptized, Acts 9:15-16. Therefore, when the Lord calls you and me it is because we have a place to fill in His plan. He knows us, our abilities and limitations, and He qualifies us where we fail so that we can do exactly the work that needs to be done for His glory, II Corinthians 12:9. Who of us can afford to say "No" when God calls?

II. God's Call May Be Misunderstood, 3:5-9.

1. It may be mistaken as man's call, verses 5-6. Sometimes God's call is so unexpected that it is misinterpreted. When Samuel heard his name being called he naturally thought the aged Eli was calling him. God had never spoken before in this manner, so far as Samuel knew, and he did not understand this to be God's call. Many men have first questioned if their impressions may have been the result of influence by relatives or friends rather than the call of God. However, when God calls He gives evidence of the willing heart that such is a Divine call and one can be assured that it is so. Let the one who has difficulty determining if the Lord has truly called honestly pray, "Lord, show me your will and I will do it, whatever the cost." Jesus has assured us that the man who is willing to obey God's will is surely enabled to know the truth, John 7:17.

2. It may be mistaken because of man's spiritual immaturity, verse 7. Let us not be critical of Samuel because he did not recognize the Lord's call. Remember that he is but a lad. Most scholars suggest his age at this call to have been in the area of twelve to fourteen years. To say "*Samuel did not yet know the Lord,*" does not mean he knew nothing of God. He had been serving at the tabernacle for possibly nine years and had learned much of the religious history of Israel and the revelation of God. In fact, he probably knew more about God's dealing with Israel than the average man did. However, Samuel had not yet had the experience of personal communion with God such as was now taking place. He had never talked with the Lord nor seen visions by divine inspiration. Thus we can say he did not know the Lord. This very spiritual immaturity hinders his identification of the call with Jehovah. In later years he lived in such perfect communion with the Lord that he could speak in His name and give His message upon a moment's notice. It is no shame to be spiritually immature so long as one does not remain that way. See II Peter 3:18.

3. It will persist until it is thoroughly understood, verses 8-9. God's call is not easily brushed aside. If at first one does not understand it nor rightly respond to it, the call comes again and again. It would be impossible to say how long God's call persists if it is not heeded. One elderly man told this writer that he had received a call to the ministry in early manhood and it had remained with him ever since. Now it ceased to be a call to preach (due to his health) and became a deep conviction of duty neglected. The Lord called Samuel by name four times before the lad answered him properly. Three times Samuel had gone to Eli, until Eli had detected it was the Lord calling the boy. The fourth time the Lord called, Samuel answered as Eli instructed him, "*Speak: for thy servant heareth,*" verse 10. Now the Lord is ready to issue the commission and reveal the message. Let not man think he can escape God's call by ignoring it or pretending it is not there.

III. God's Message Is Given to His Called Ministers, 3:10-18.

1. God's message is given to the willing ear, verse 10. The voice of the Lord echoed in Samuel's ear the fourth time and Samuel answered, "Speak all you want to Lord for your servant is attentively listening." (This translation gives full meaning to the verbal forms.) This willingness to hear God's word is an essential to receiving it. The man who stubbornly stops his ears against the truth of God will not find it forced in upon him. The Holy Spirit interprets the word to those who willingly seek its contents. The

person who is content to sit passively in a congregation to see what effect the message will have upon him is likely to go unimpressed with spiritual reality. But the one who sits with a seeking heart, anxious to commune with God through meditation on the truth, will find God's presence there. Seek the truth of God with a heart willing to obey and the Holy Spirit will make its message alive for you.

2. God's message may include announcement of judgment, verses 11-12. How it must have pained the heart of Samuel to hear that his foster father Eli fell under the judgment of God. It would not be easy to hear this message, nor to tell it, nor to see it come to pass. And yet, was God calling him that he might do the things which brought only delight? No, Samuel, as the prophet of God, would bear the sins of Israel upon his heart. The ministry has no place for the man who wishes to speak only pleasing things. Many times a pastor will preach a message from the pulpit which breaks his heart. It may condemn sin and announce judgment. It may speak against a close friend, but it must be delivered. Even if the message be one of judgment, it is God's message, and His messenger must not fail to faithfully communicate it. Don't be angry with your pastor's sermons against sin. It is God's message and not his own.

3. God's message shows no partiality among men, verses 13-15. Even the house of the aged Eli will be judged for sin. We can say it is right for judgment to fall upon a man like Abimelech, but Eli has devoted his life to Jehovah's service. Surely he will be spared judgment. No, he will not be spared, for thus God would appear to condone sin and to show partiality among men. Sin will be judged and the consequences of sin will be suffered, whoever is guilty. Eli seems to have been effective as a priest but he failed as a father. When his sons sinned he made little effort to correct them. Therefore the judgment which is now pronounced is so severe that no sacrifice will ever avail to remove it. If God did not spare His judgment on sin at Calvary, why would he make an exception of Eli, or you, or me? God's judgment is according to righteousness. *"Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons,"* Acts 10:34.

God is still calling, infilling, strengthening, and prospering His witnesses. To be saved is to have the opportunity to work somewhere in His vineyard. Be honest with yourself and God. Lay your heart open to the Spirit's call and when it comes readily say, *"Here am I, send me,"* Isaiah 6:8.

QUESTIONS

1. Identify: Elkanah, Hannah, Eli, Samuel.
2. Locate Shiloh on a map of Palestine.
3. Describe Hannah's prayer for a son.
4. Tell what we know of the early life of Samuel.
5. Describe the call of Samuel to be a prophet.
6. Why was judgment pronounced against Eli's house?