

HEARING GOD IN A WORLD THAT IS NOT LISTENING: THE CALL OF SAMUEL

Text: I Samuel 3:1-10

Samuel means, "God has heard." The young man whose name means "God has heard" is about to hear from God.

Before Samuel hears the call of God on his life, his godly mother gives us an analysis of what God is like. It is advantageous to know who is proffering this mighty call. We see God is omniscient: I Samuel 2:1-3. God is omnipotent. History is "His" story: I Samuel 2:4-11. God is holy: I Samuel 2:12-36.

I. The call of God came when the nation was at its decadent worse.

I Samuel 3:1-3

The phrase from I Samuel 3:3, "*And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD...*" tells us this was dawn, just before daylight when the lamps inside the Temple were no longer needed. It was the job of the priest to monitor these lights as spoken of in Exodus 27:20,21.

Two things come to mind. First, I believe as a rule, God likes to speak to us first thing in the morning. Job 7:17 and 18 says, "*What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him? and that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him? And that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment?*" Isaiah 50:4b,5 tells us, "*...He wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. The Lord GOD hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back.*"

Secondly, this phrase reflects what it says in I Samuel 3:1b: "*...And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision.*" The vision of God is actually synonymous with "a word from the Lord." How serious is it not to have a word from God to address the culture in which we live? Let the wise man Solomon tell you, "*Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he*" (Proverbs 29:18). Without a word from the Lord, or in other words, "vision," a nation is in deep, serious peril as illustrated

by the words of Jeremiah in his prophesy against Jerusalem, *"Her gates are sunk into the ground; he hath destroyed and broken her bars: her king and her princes are among the Gentiles: the law is no more; her prophets also find no vision from the LORD"* (Lamentations 2:9). Let us not get discouraged when it seems the nation in which we live has gone too far, because God also says, *"Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound"* (Romans 5:20). The word *"abounded"* in reference to sin, is the Greek word: *"pleonazo"* which means to make or be more, i.e. increase. It can go into something more if not caught in time, but please notice the word for *"abound"* in reference to God's grace is translated from the Greek word, *"hyperperisseuo"* meaning to super-abound, beyond increase to much more or exceeding more. To borrow from the world of basketball, if we sin, we are capable of *"rebounding"* which means *"a recovery of possession of a missed shot."* Eli and his sons missed, but God is going to allow Israel to recover by God's proverbial *"point-guard, three-pointer"* - Samuel. It is sad to see Eli, the great priest of God and his sons fall so far from God and His blessings. This is a cautionary warning for all of us. A lawyer can learn the fine art of being honest when one is not honest. A doctor can learn how to keep going without being healthy. A preacher can lose a glimpse of how very holy God is while living in the constant area where God most often manifests His presence.

II. The call of God came to the novice.

I Samuel 3:4-7.

The Bible tells us that we are not to lay hands in ordination on a man who is described as a novice: *"Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil"* (I Timothy 3:6). The word is translated from *"neophutos"* which means *"newly planted."* It doesn't mean the call is not real, it simply means that we are to observe and when we see that the actions of the called young person are in biblical and moral harmony, then we make the public approval. According to the Jewish historian Josephus, Samuel was about 12 years old. Although he was young, God saw in this young man someone in whom he could trust. Genesis 18:19a informs us of Abraham: *"For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD..."*

III. The call of God was repetitious.

I Samuel 3:8-10a.

God is so patient with us! Gideon cried out, "...*Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of...*" (Judges 6:13b). Twice Gideon tested the call of God on his life by the dew on the fleece (Judges 6:36-40). Then God allowed Gideon to sneak into the camp of the Midianites and Amalekites to hear the confirmation of God's call through an enemy soldier's dream (Judges 7:13-14). We see this principle in the call of God on Moses' life. Moses wanted to know who was doing the talking and God gave Moses the most powerful name in Heaven and earth, "Jehovah, -- I AM THAT I AM" (Exodus 3:13,14). Then God showed the doubting Moses that he would miraculously activate his shepherd's rod into the rod of God. He showed Moses through the leprous hand and promised that in the beginning of the plagues he would see the call was real on his life (Exodus 4:1-9). Then doubting, fearful Moses tried to explain that he could not talk very well when he would be coming before Pharaoh. God assured him He would send Aaron, his older brother to go with him to do the talking (Exodus 4:10-18). In our story today we see that God called out to Samuel three times.

Francis Thomason's poem, "The Hound of Heaven" has three lines that speaks of God's call most eloquently, "Now of that long pursuit, comes on at hand the bruit; That Voice is round me like a bursting sea." We cannot escape it. What a thrill to know that when God wants a man or woman, He chases us down!

IV. The call of God was personal.

I Samuel 3: 9,10.

We cannot escape the fact that God's call is personal, for He calls our young hero by name three times, and the third time, God calls his name twice: "Samuel, Samuel!" (I Samuel 3:10b). This is like placing an exclamation point behind the call. Notice three characteristics of this call:

- A. We should make ourselves available ("*...Go, lie down...*" I Samuel 3:9a).
- B. We should not be pridefully presumptuous ("*...if He call thee...*" I Samuel 3:9b).
- C. God is speaking, we are the ones who need to do the listening ("*...Speak; LORD; for thy servant heareth...*" I Samuel 3:9c, 10c).

No less than fifteen times in Scripture the statement is set forth, "*he that hath ears let him hear,*" specifically, Matthew 11:15, 13:9, 13:43; Mark 4:9,

4:23, 7:16; Luke 8:8,14:35; Revelation 2:7, 2:11, 2:17, 2:29, 3:6, 3:13, 3:22. Furthermore, our growth in grace, knowledge and wisdom from God is contingent upon our listening to what God says, as Jesus mentioned in Mark 4:24: *"And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given."* The more we hear, the more we know. If we ignore what God wants us to hear, we will be deprived of "custom-made" words from God just for us. Psalm 36:9: *"For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light."* We must obey the obvious light He gives us so that we may see more light in the deeper things of God. Any mother of teen-agers will tell you that her children may have excellent hearing, but sometimes they don't hear or heed her admonitions. Dare I say, not a few wives could say a hearty, "Amen!" to that?

D. We must place ourselves absolutely at the disposal of God. (*"Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant..."* 1 Samuel 3:10c). We are the serving Christ; Christ is to be in complete charge. Remember, Eli admonished Samuel to call Him "LORD!"

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.