

Samuel 3 - Here Am I

We have seen, from 1 Samuel chapters 1 and 2, the foundation that Samuel had from his mother's spiritual provision for him. Samuel's response to the opportunity he had was very favorable. It was said that as he grew, he was in favor both with God and men (1Sam 2:26). It is interesting that the same thing was said of Christ after His encounter in the Temple when he was twelve (Luke 2:52). This Godly principle of spiritual perseverance accompanies successful service to the Lord. We will see this in chapter 3 as Samuel responded to the specific calling that God revealed to Him.

1. A ready nation -

Israel was a ready nation. It was not ready in that it had prepared for revival with attention to prayer and devotion to God. It was ready in that it had sunk so low that there was no place to go but up. After the last of those who had known the power of God in the days of Joshua, Israel lost sight of God's power. Judges were raised up as Israel would stray which was followed by deliverance. With each cycle, their spiritual condition declined. The book of Judges closed with this judgment:

Judg 21:25 In those days *there was* no king in Israel: every man did *that which was* right in his own eyes.

The narrative of the three reigns of the united Kingdom of Israel that would create the Golden Age of Israel starts to take shape at this point as God prepares His prophet to usher it in. In 1Sam 3:1 we see the deeply deteriorated spiritual condition that begged for such a prophet.

1Sam 3:1 And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; *there was* no open vision.

In those days, hearing from the Lord was rare. It didn't happen often, and there wasn't a clear order of individuals designated as the "speakers for God." This scarcity made the revelation of God's will to Samuel a significant event for the Jewish nation. God's providence called Samuel to serve as a *prophet* as an established role. From then on, alongside the roles of king and priest, the prophet became one of the three key figures in preparing for the arrival of Jesus Who would be a king, a priest for atonement, and also a prophet to teach and guide the people in the truth. There were no open visions, meaning that although prophecy was crucial for Israel's spiritual life, the role of prophet hadn't been widely proclaimed and established yet. The gift of prophecy hadn't been completely withheld, but it also hadn't been common.

Even though Samuel had been growing in favor with God and man, he had not had direct contact with God nor had he received any prophecy from Him. His experience was in serving in the Temple under the tutelage of Eli.

1Sam 3:7 Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the word of the LORD yet revealed unto him.

2. A ready servant -

As we read vs. 2-10, the most outstanding statement is Samuel's response to the prompting of God, "Here am I."

1Sam 3:2-10 And it came to pass at that time, when Eli *was* laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, *that* he could not see;

3And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God *was*, and Samuel was laid down *to sleep*;

4That the LORD called Samuel: and he answered, **Here *am* I.**

5And he ran unto Eli, and said, **Here *am* I**; for thou calledst me.

And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down.

6And the LORD called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, **Here *am* I;** for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again.

7Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the word of the LORD yet revealed unto him.

8And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, **Here *am* I;** for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child.

9Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

10And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, **Speak; for thy servant heareth.**

Someone might try to argue that since Samuel didn't know that it was God calling him, his response does not indicate that he had a ready heart for the Lord. It actually *does* reveal his readiness because, contrary to how Eli's son treated their father, Samuel was *quick* to *obey* the spiritual leadership of Eli. To obey the high priest of God spoke of his spiritual character and readiness. After Eli understood and explained that it was the Lord who was calling, Samuel did not hesitate to respond, "Speak; for thy servant heareth." It is always so exciting to read about the first time someone in the Bible positively responds to God's first call to them.

3. A ready response -

There are a number of observations about Samuel answering God's call that we can learn from:

- Samuel's response was immediate

Samuel did not hesitate when he heard the call. He immediately responded. This reminds us of those who claimed they wanted to follow Jesus, but stalled until it was more convenient.

Luke 9:57-62 And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain *man* said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.

58And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air *have* nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay *his* head.

59And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.

60Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.

61And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.

62And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

So many opportunities to change our lives are lost because people postpone serving God. Consider Lot's wife whose looking back is understood as one who was lingering because she was looking back longingly for the life she was leaving behind.

Gen 19:26 But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt. **[The idea in Hebrew was that she *kept* looking back, dawdling because of her desire for the world.]**

- Samuel's response was consistent and unwavering

He responded the same way three times. Three is a significant number. We

are usually convinced of something after three times. In public speaking, more than three examples is overkill. If you use more than three adjectives to describe something it is tedious. In communication the smallest number to establish a pattern is three.

In physics – Newton's three rules of motion.

In art and photography – principles of composition, such as the rule of thirds...

The three dramatic conflicts – internal, relational and external.

Think of some great marketing slogans:

Just do it.

Snap! Crackle! Pop!

Diamonds are forever.

By hanging in there after the third call, Samuel demonstrated endurance. He was ready to see the Lord work in his life on the fourth call.

- Samuel responded even when it was unclear

He kept getting the same response from Eli. He was so very *sure* he heard Eli: "Thou *didst* call me." In the end, Samuel was open to the possibility he had not understood properly. Sometimes *we* are so sure of ourselves but rather than admit we are wrong we give up. If we are genuine in our commitment to the Lord that commitment will survive the adjustments we have to make as God's will becomes understood better. You might not always understand what God is calling you to do, but don't waiver in your commitment to God at God reveals His plans for you.

- Samuel persevered when it was awkward and even dangerous

The significance of the calling rose to a whole new level when Samuel found out what it was that God was calling him to do.

1Sam 3:11-18 And the LORD said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle.

12In that day I will perform against Eli all *things* which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end.

13For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.

14And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever.

15And Samuel lay until the morning, and opened the doors of the house of the LORD. And Samuel feared to shew Eli the vision.

16Then Eli called Samuel, and said, Samuel, my son. And he answered, **Here *am* I.**

17And 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.

18And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him. And he said, *It is the LORD*: let him do what seemeth him good.

Samuel was clearly in an awkward position. The Scripture plainly says that he was scared to share the vision with Eli. When Eli *was* the one who called out to Samuel, Samuel demonstrated his commitment and answered again, "Here am I." In spite of the difficulty of delivering this message to Eli.

The Bible is filled with people who failed in their response to God's call. When God came walking in the garden, Adam didn't come out of hiding until God called out, "Where art thou?" Cain

was not forthcoming when God asked him where his brother was. Noah preached for 120 years and no one in the entire population of the world responded. Ten out of twelve spies came back to Moses and wanted to retreat from God's call to the Promised Land.

The Bible is also filled with other people who responded with "Here am I." Some started off a little shaky, but they held firm in their commitment as they got going. When God called Noah, he showed up at work for 120 years. When God called Abraham he set out on a journey to follow God for 100 years. When God called Moses out of the burning bush, he said "Here am I." When God called Jacob, he said "Here am I."

We have the assurance of God answering when we call on Him.

Ps 50:14-15 Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High:

15And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.

King Manasseh was so wicked that he brought Israel to the point that God was going to irrevocably judge them with captivity. He himself was taken in fetters to Babylon. There, God even heard this evil king's cry.

2Chr 33:12-13 And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers,

13And prayed unto him: and he was intreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD he *was* God.

When we pray together, Christ assures us, "There am I." God is pleased to hear us when we assemble together for prayer meeting.

Matt 18:19-20 Again I say unto

you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.

20For where two or three are gathered together in my name, **there am I** in the midst of them.

God blessed Samuel for his readiness.

1Sam 3:19-21 And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground.

20And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel *was* established *to be* a prophet of the LORD. [**Dan was the northernmost point in Israel and Beersheba was the southernmost.**]

21And the LORD appeared again in Shiloh: for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD. [**Shiloh was where the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant resided.**]

Samuel served at the heart of the ministry with a heart in the ministry.

4. Here am I, too -

- Salvation

God is continually calling out to man to turn and repent. Salvation begins with hearing the call of the Spirit.

Heb 2:3 How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard *him*;

2Cor 6:2(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is*

the day of salvation.)

- Serving God

Isa 6:8-12 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here *am* I; send me. 9And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.

10Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest [**or, unless**] they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.

11Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate,

12And the LORD have removed men far away, and *there be* a great forsaking in the midst of the land.

Do we hear the call of God when it is time to participate in outreach? "Here am I." With every soul you encounter, God's call goes out, "Who will tell this one about Jesus." Our answer should be "Here am I." With every tract you hand out, you are saying, "Here am I." Is there snow to shovel? Leaves to rake?

There are many things that go to keep a church alive to launch our Gospel outreach. Every Sunday morning when you show up to worship you are saying "Here am I." When you hear of a need it is your opportunity to say, "Here am I." Is there gardening to be done? A special event to prepare for? A ride to or from church? A room to be painted? A class to be supported? A meal to prepare? Maintenance to perform? There are those who have that attitude of "Here am I," ready to work. All of these things go into creating a place to welcome the lost and disciple the saved. Perhaps God is speaking to someone's heart to join church as a member and take their place?

Is it time to say, "Here am I"?

Is your heart prepared to answer, no matter when God calls? It was said of King Rehoboam,

2Chr 12:14 And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the LORD.

Contrast this with Ezra when Israel was restored after learning the lesson of commitment to the Lord after the Captivity:

Ezra 7:10 For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do *it*, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.

1. A ready nation - Judg 21:25, 1Sam 3:1, 1Sam 3:7
2. A ready servant - 1Sam 3:2-10
3. A ready response - Luke 9:57-62, Gen 19:26, 1Sam 3:11-18, Ps 50:14-15, 2Chr 33:12-13, Matt 18:19-20, 1Sam 3:19-21
4. Here am I, too - Heb 2:3, 2Cor 6:2,8-12, 2Chr 12:14, Ezra 7:10