



CAPITOL COMMISSION

Pain and Power (I Samuel 3)

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Capitol Commission state directors are missionaries who teach weekly verse-by-verse Bible studies for legislators, lobbyists, and staff members. These Bible studies are hand-distributed to each legislative office, emailed, and made available throughout the Capitol community. The love and grace of God compels us to proclaim the truth of the Gospel with a heartfelt compassion for the Capitol community, to faithfully teach and apply the Word of God, and it is our desire to build meaningful relationships that bear fruit for an eternity to come.

With the Bible as our foundation and authority, the mission of Capitol Commission is obedience to the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) within the Capitol communities of the world. We are not a lobbying group attempting to garner votes or reform society. Our mandate is to see the hearts and lives of elected officials transformed with the Word of God. Capitol Commission is a ministry of the church seeking to proclaim the gospel message, and to help believers mature through the verse-by-verse teaching of Scripture. In the Bible, we see God's great love for the world, especially for those who have been placed in authority. This is the foundation for our ministry to you.

The church is instructed to submit and to honor government leaders (Rom 13:1-7), and as a matter of first importance, to pray for their salvation (1 Tim 2:1-4). Our desire is witness God transform the hearts and lives of elected officials, lobbyists, and staff members. We apply this mandate to four major areas of making disciples: (1) *evangelize* those who have not experienced saving faith in Jesus Christ; (2) *establish* those who desire to grow in their faith and knowledge of Scripture; (3) *equip* those called to spiritual leadership; and, (4) *encourage* churches to participate with us in ministry.

Introduction

The faithfulness of Samuel was evident in his conduct (1 Sam 2:18-21) and his calling (3:1-21). God's calling of Samuel for service to Him is recorded in chapter 3. Ordinarily, the high priest Eli would receive a prophetic call from God, but a "word from the LORD was rare [i.e. precious] in those days" (3:1). God communicated with Eli infrequently. First Samuel 3:1 begins with a tragic depiction of someone involved in spiritual things, yet void of contact with God. Therefore, the calling of Samuel will be definite and obvious, and Samuel will communicate the message of judgment on Eli and his family. *Throughout this week's study, it is prudent to ask whether your life is characterized by a lack of spiritual sensitivity and therefore your failures grow in magnitude as a consequence of sin, or are you maturing in faith through dedication to God in the study of His Word and responding to His truth in life and prayer for Him to use you mightily by His grace and for His glory.* The words of Exodus 34:6-7 are worth pondering in response to your self evaluation: God is "compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and

truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished. . . ."

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

(3:1-10) First Samuel is an especially important historical book because it records the transition from theocracy to monarchy. The failure of the priestly office is evident in the opening chapters. Therefore, the prophetic office will be formed and the kingly office will be founded. The rule by God under leaders like Moses and the judges has ended, and God is seen to call Samuel as priest-prophet. Samuel will minister to the Lord, but his office will also be prophetic. He will anoint both Saul and David with oil, and God will speak to the king only through a prophet.

SIN NOT ONLY PREVENTS HEARING THE WORD OF GOD, BUT ALSO SUCH "WICKEDNESS" MEANS GOD "WILL NOT HEAR" US (PS 66:18).

"The boy Samuel" was now approximately twelve years of age. He lived in the Tabernacle at Shiloh since three years of age (from the time that Samuel's mother, Hannah, dedicated him to the Lord's service). He ministered before the Lord, and was being educated by Eli (since the Tabernacle was the centre not only for religion but also for culture). The time was lamentable because "visions were infrequent." Only three prophets may be identified from the time of Joshua until Samuel (Judg 4:4; 6:8; 1 Sam 2:27-36), and only five revelations (Judg 2:1-3; 6:11-23; 7:2-11; 10:11-14; 13:3-21). Indeed, a "word from the LORD" was precious. There was no recognized prophet to whom God spoke because Israel was rebellious; therefore, God gave them "into the hand of their enemies" (Judg 2:14). The infrequency of God's Word was likely the consequence of His judgment. God was displeased with the sinfulness of the nation. It was truly a somber time, as Proverbs 29:18 indicates ("Where there is no vision, the people are unrestrained, but happy is he who keeps the law"). Sin not only prevents hearing the Word of God, but also such "wickedness" means God "will not hear" us (Ps 66:18).

The Latin phrase *post tenebras lux* ("after darkness light") historically means that God's people receive light when the Word of God is proclaimed freely (cf. Job 17:12; Ps 118:27). Frances M. Owen (1842-83) conveyed this truth in the

CAPITOL COMMISSION BIBLE STUDIES ~ GEORGIA

LEGISLATORS AND LOBBYISTS: TUESDAYS @ 7:30AM, 514 CLOB (DURING THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION)

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opening stanza of her hymn: “Lighten the darkness of our life’s long night / though which we blindly stumble to the day. / Shadows mislead us; Father, send Thy light / to set our footsteps in the homeward way.”

SCRIPTURE IS THE TOKEN OF GOD’S GRACE; THEREFORE, ITS PROCLAMATION AND ACCEPTANCE IS CRUCIAL TO THE WELLBEING OF THE INDIVIDUAL AND OUR NATION.

First Samuel 3 also communicates the primacy of God’s Word. The normative method for hearing God’s Word in the Old Testament was prophecy, and the means for this communication was the prophet. God’s calling of Samuel will make him the “father of the prophetic office.” God’s people will not leave the darkness of the times unless He provides a prophet. The Bible is God’s gift to His people, and the absence of hearing God’s Word is His judgment because it indicates the loss of His presence (1 Sam 28:6, 15; Ps 74:9-11; Isa 6:9-10; Amos 8:11-12; Mark 4:9-12). God’s grace is evident when His Word is heard and heeded. Scripture is the token of God’s grace; therefore, its proclamation and acceptance is crucial to the wellbeing of the individual and our nation.

The reference to Eli’s failing eyesight is intended to cause one to consider the manner of his spiritual sight. By referencing “the lamp of God” and “the ark,” Samuel’s spiritual sensitivity is indicated. Samuel was not only close to the Lord spiritually, but also physically as he lay near the ark. Samuel’s relationship with the Lord was certain to result in God’s presence. Indeed, the call of God was direct and personal. Samuel was active and willing to know the Lord, but did not yet know to discern a personal revelation from Him. Moreover, the experience was entirely new to Samuel, whereas Eli had no excuse for his lack of spiritual insight. Verses 4-10 are instructive with regard to the character of God. There is not any harshness or impatience on God’s part, but He is gentle and kind for Samuel to understand.

SPIRITUAL DIFFICULTY

(3:11-18) God’s message to Samuel confirmed the prophecy previously delivered by an unnamed prophet (2:27-36). The completeness of God’s judgment against Eli’s lineage would tingle “both ears of everyone who [heard] it.” It was not merely Eli’s sons who had sinned, but also Eli because he did not rebuke his sons by expelling them from the priesthood (3:13). Neither blood sacrifice (Heb. *zebhaḥ*) nor unbloody sacrifice (Heb. *minḥāh*) could make atonement for the sins of the house of Eli. Eli did much good during the difficult and disorderly period of the judges, but did not appropriately rebuke the sinfulness in his own home. *What application should*

these verses have upon those who witness evil extolled as good and the good rejected as evil (cf. Isa 5:20)?

Samuel experienced spiritual difficulty with having to communicate the message of judgment that God committed to him against Eli and his lineage. There was certainly some tender affection of Eli toward Samuel to regard him as “son” (3:6, 16). The pain that Samuel experienced was communicating the Word of God. Samuel learned quickly how painful it could be at times to proclaim God’s Word. Nevertheless, *the true messenger of God must speak for the sake of truth when human sentiments may persuade otherwise*. God’s Word speaks “life and death, blessings and curses” (cf. Deut 30:19). It is crucial to proclaim God’s Word because it is the Lord who determines what is good (3:18). God’s will for his servants is always good and perfect, and therefore, Samuel heeded Eli’s words to accept God’s calling on his life. Eli knew God’s judgment would be good if He so determined.

SPIRITUAL POWER

(3:19-21) Whatever difficulty Samuel may have experienced in communicating the message of God, the power of the calling on his life was evident in the faithful presence of God. “Thus Samuel grew and the LORD was with him and let none of his words fail” (3:19). The fulfillment of God’s words proved His faithfulness to Samuel (cf. Deut 18:22). The same authentication may be expected today from those who claim to speak as God’s messenger (*i.e. if a message does not coincide with the clear teachings of Scripture then it should be rejected*). God’s people throughout the ages may have the confidence of His presence when faithful and obedient to His Word. God’s people are called to display His character and to proclaim the message of His Word to the world around us, and therefore to refrain from the activities and habits that clearly violate God’s Word.

GOD’S PEOPLE THROUGHOUT THE AGES MAY HAVE THE CONFIDENCE OF HIS PRESENCE WHEN FAITHFUL AND OBEDIENT TO HIS WORD.

The powerful evidence of God’s calling was proclaimed “from Dan” (the far north) “even to Beer-sheba” (the far south) (*i.e. the entire country*; cf. Judg 20:1). Samuel was humble to hear and to obey the Word of the Lord; therefore, God extended his reputation throughout the entire country. The famine of hearing God’s Word ended (3:21) because Samuel learned to say, “Speak, for Your servant is listening.” God has spoken in the 66 books of the Bible. Are you listening and obeying? When God calls to service, He also grants spiritual power by His grace and for His glory.