

1 Samuel 3: 1-21; "The Calling of a Child", A Sermon delivered after the 2009 Vacation Bible School, by Pastor Paul Rendall, on August 9th, 2009, in the Morning Worship Service.

The passage that we have just read is one of the most quaint and precious in all the Word of God. And it strikes a cord in every parent's heart. The longing of every parent is to see their children come to know the Lord, for the Lord to call them to Himself, and for Him to raise that child up to useful service in His sight. But every one of us who believes God's word has come to know that the salvation of any person is dependent on the Lord's calling and not upon the actions of their own will and choice. And it is not ultimately dependent upon the parent's actions, or the parent's will and choice either. Salvation is not of works, but rather it is of God who calls. It is by grace, through faith, and not of ourselves. We see here that Samuel was just a young lad when the Lord called him. In verse 7 it says, "Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, nor was the word of the Lord yet revealed to him." He was young, but he was not too young to be saved. Can young children be called to know the Lord? I am sure that they can - and so I would like us to examine together the calling of Samuel. Because I believe that the calling of Samuel to know the Lord can teach us much about how God calls children and others to salvation in Christ today. From the calling of Samuel we shall draw 4 lessons.

1st of all - The Word of the Lord is integrally linked to the Effectual Call of Samuel, or any child. (Verses 1-4)

It says here in verse 1 that the word of the Lord was rare in those days. It was precious. This is explained by saying that there was no widespread revelation. The word precious or rare means that visions were uncommon; they were infrequent and seldom and therefore precious to every God-fearing person. God was not sparingly revealing Himself to many people in that generation. It is possible that there were not many conversions taking place and God had largely withdrawn His saving power and blessing from His people. Before the coming of Christ, God would speak to men through his prophets, revealing His truth and His will to them. There was the enscripturated Word of God, which God gave to His people Israel through Moses in the book of the law; and this was placed in the side of the ark. But as for visions and the word coming from the Lord in the days before Samuel, it was rare. This may have been because of the unfaithfulness of many in Israel whose hearts were cold toward the worship of God. It may have come about, especially, because of the gross sins like those of Eli's sons which are mentioned in the narrative in the previous chapter; despising the offering of the Lord, and sleeping with the women who assembled at the door of the tent of meeting. But there had been no great prophet in Israel since Moses, whom the people could resort to; to know the will of God. You and I need to understand that today, when God calls a child, or any other person, it is by the Word of God that

He does so. He reveals that it is His own will that any person who can understand the gospel may come and receive it. He tells us in the Word of God that salvation is based upon His promise of what He will do through Jesus Christ His Son, in His opening and changing the hardest heart. It is by faith in the promises of the Word concerning Christ, and the good news of the gospel in the preaching of the forgiveness of sins in Jesus' name, which will be the way and the means by which He will open the mind and open the heart and reveal Himself to any seeking soul. You also should know that there is work of God which goes on behind the scenes, in the heart of any child whom the Lord is calling to Himself. It is a work of God the Father drawing to Christ, and a work of God the Holy Spirit moving in the heart to make Jesus Christ attractive to the person who has come to know that they are a sinner, whether they are young, or whether they are old. The Word of God, when it is accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit, can penetrate the heart of a young child or a person of any age, and the seed of truth and righteousness be planted in the soil of that heart that has been made tender by the grace of God.

It is the Word of God that reveals God's will to a child or to anyone else who may or may not be seeking Christ. Samuel was in the right place to be saved. He was in the tabernacle at Shiloh with Eli the priest, but the Word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to Him. He had not yet come to the place where by grace he could see the connections in truth. He had not yet come to the place where he saw that the Word of God would be the great authority in his life, giving him direction as to all that he should say and do. He had not yet come to the place where the Word of God would be the most important of revelations in his personal life; where he would listen to the voice of God speaking to him through it; where he would desire the Lord to speak to him through it; a greater desire than all other desires in his life. In that day, when God was to save and call a man to the prophetic ministry He spoke to him directly as He did with Samuel. God does not call people to Himself in a vacuum. He always uses His word, whether it is directly, as it was with Samuel in those times, or whether it is by means of the Spirit using the Word preached, in our days; using the Word preached to call us out of darkness into His marvelous light. "The Spirit breathes upon the Word, and brings the truth to light." "Precepts and promises afford a sanctifying light." You see; the voice of the Lord is still as powerful today to call men and women and children to Himself as it was then. "He speaks and listening to His Word, new life the dead receive." "The mournful broken hearts rejoice, the humble poor believe."

Samuel did not yet know the Lord, nor was the Word of the Lord yet revealed to him. You should notice that it is God who chose the time and the place of where His Word would be revealed to Samuel. It would be in the house of the Lord. It would be late; very late in the night before the lamp of God went out in the tabernacle of the Lord. God came to Samuel and stood and called. Here God is pictured as coming and standing and calling. It is the pre-incarnate Christ who stood and called, just as it was the pre-incarnate Christ who was "walking in the

garden in the cool of the day", after Adam and Eve had sinned and fallen from their original righteousness, and He had to come looking for them. In the salvation of a child, or of any other age of person, it is always God through Jesus Christ who comes seeking and looking for us. Remember that; and do not boast in the means of grace in the conversion of any person. It is the mercy and grace of God that any person is saved. It is not of him who wills, or of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. But God knows how to keep the light burning and shining in His church, even when the lamp is growing dim, as the text pictures for us. Such was the case of Eli the priest here spiritually. His physical eyes had grown so dim that he could not see. He could not see physically, but he also could not see what was to become of the cause of God and truth upon the earth. Sometimes we, as fathers and leaders in Christ church wonder the same thing. We long for our children to become Christians but sometimes they have not turned out well. They do not seem to love the things of God and it grieves our hearts. Sometimes they have sat under the means of grace in the preaching of the Word for years, and still they do not come to Christ; still they hold out in making public profession of faith. O when will they awaken out of the sleep of spiritual death and come to the light? When will they see that this life is not to be lived to ourselves but to our God? Eli saw these things and he was concerned for the glory of God. He did not know how a faithful ministry among men could continue when his own sons were so corrupt. God's answer to the questions and the pleadings of his heart was to be found in this little child who he had become a surrogate parent to. God would raise up a faithful priest who would do according to what was in His holy heart and mind. Samuel would experience the effectual call, even when Eli's own sons would not. Let me say by way of application; if you are a man who has children, and those children are not saved yet; do not cease to bring them up before the throne of God no matter how corrupt they have become, unless they have sinned the sin against the Holy Spirit. It appears that Eli's sons did sin that sin unto death, and thus the prophecies of the Word of God against them. But this did not deter the heart of Eli the priest away from the glory of God. O parent! Do not let your heart be deterred away from the glory of God and the cause and kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, if your own children do not come to Christ in the time that you want them to. God can, and He will call them to Himself, if they are one of His Elect. The offers of His free love and grace are still there being preaching in His churches to this day. He has not yet removed all preachers and all preaching from the land. And He has not failed to consider the pleading prayers of loving parents for the salvation of their children. And so, dear parent, persevere in the reading and sharing of the word of God. Persevere in insisting that your children listen to it and sit under it, as the means which God uses to call every person who comes to Him, to saving faith. And then secondly dear young person or any person in this place who sits under the ministry of the Word often; think of the great privileges related to your being called to Christ, which have been given to you, and get alone with God and you read your Bible and pray and call upon His holy name, that He might open your

eyes and show you wonderful things of salvation from His Word. If you do not do this; you may become hardened under the preaching of the Word. You may become a little Pharisee in among the people of God and lose your soul in the end; if you do not improve upon all the truth of the word of God which has been given to you. O I plead with you; ask yourself whether you have really come to know God, and whether He has called you in particular. Do not think that you are converted if your parents are converted. You are only converted if you are called by Christ through the Word and you respond to that call. But this leads me to:

The 2nd Lesson we learn from the calling of Samuel, which is that, The Right Kind of Human Direction is very useful when a person is being effectually called.

We see from our text how very important this is in the calling of children. In verse 8 it says, "And the Lord called Samuel again the third time." "So he arose and went to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you did call me.'" "Then Eli perceived that the Lord had called the boy." "Therefore Eli said to Samuel, 'Go lie down; and it shall be, if He calls you, that you must say, 'Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears.'" "So Samuel went and lay down in his place." We see here that there was a readiness on Samuel's part to respond to the Lord's voice, but there was also confusion. Samuel thought that it was Eli - his foster father - who was calling him - but it was the Lord. When the Lord audibly called, Samuel immediately ran to Eli thinking that he had called him. He confused the voice of God with the voice of men. And this confusion may exist in the hearts of children today as well. They may think that it is their parents calling when really it is God. They may think that it is their pastor calling or their Sunday School teacher calling when it is really God. The child or young person is very willing to comply with their parents wishes to come to church, to listen to good preaching, to participate in all the activities of the worship and outreach of the church, and yet they do not recognize God's voice in these things. The Lord may be calling outwardly in the preaching of the gospel, and yet the child does not come to Christ. He is coming to his parent's expectation, to do what will please them, but still he does not yet know the Lord. The word of the Lord has not yet been revealed to them in saving power. What can be done? What should be done?

Sometimes when we as parents or leaders in Christ's church come to understand the doctrine of the Lord's effectual call, we cease to think of human direction and help as being good. Since the child is entirely passive as regards the Lord's work in the call, and since we have come to see the evils of decisionalism (Making a decision for Christ by mental assent, and then indicating that decision by some outward indication of responding to the gospel, like walking the aisle or praying a prayer, or raising a hand); that therefore nothing of human help or advice is of any avail. But this is not true. We must urge them to respond to the Lord's voice. We exhort them to pray and we tell them to respond in total submission to what God and Christ are calling to them to do. We keep telling our children to show the Lord by their attitudes and words, that they are teachable,

that they are willing to do His will. And then, as it says in John 7: 17 - "If anyone wills to do God's will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether Jesus spoke of His own authority." It is indeed very important to have the help and direction of parents or church leaders who will direct in the right way. We must try to discern correctly if the Lord is calling them. When we see their willingness to be taught, then we direct them to the Lord Himself, and to the truth of the Word which they need.

And children - This is the way for you to come to know the Lord. Call upon Him saying, "Speak Lord, for your servant hears." Tell him that you have been hearing the call of gospel. Tell Him that you know that many are called and hear outwardly, but that few are chosen. Tell Him that you are not worthy for Him to save you. Tell Him that you know and understand that it will take Christ's power to save you from your sins and that you want the gospel to come with Christ's power to your heart. Ask Him to come to your heart and soul and change your heart and come into your heart to do a work of grace there. Tell Him that you believe in Jesus' work on your behalf, that Christ died for sinners, and will not refuse the sinner who is coming to Him. And ask Him to let you know that He is there at work in your heart. These are the requests of anyone who wants to be saved. And because of God's faithfulness to His Word, they shall be granted if the seeker is sincere.

I like C.H. Spurgeon's illustration of the difference between the general call of God in the gospel, and the effectual call of God in salvation. He says, "A mother hen has a general cluck that she gives when all her chicks are around her; but if there is an impending danger, then she gives a very different call from the ordinary - a peculiar call - and the little chicks come running as fast as they can and hide for safety under her wings." "That is the effectual call that brings the soul to Christ." Children and young people and all persons who do not know if you know Christ; do you see your danger of eternal judgment outside of Christ? Do you see how sin threatens to ruin all that is good in your life and separate from the good and gracious influences and blessings of the Almighty? Will you not come to Christ and find life and blessing and salvation and peace?

The 3rd Lesson that we can draw from the calling of Samuel is this: A true and effectual call of the Lord will not come without personal relational difficulties.

What a person will become as a Christian will often, in a nutshell form, be manifested even very shortly after conversion. Samuel was to be a prophet, as well as a priest, of the Lord. Verse 11 says, "Then the Lord said to Samuel: 'Behold I will do something in Israel at which both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle.'" "In that day I will perform against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end." "For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knows, because his sons made themselves vile, and he did not restrain them." The calling of Samuel was to be a prophet of the Lord, and his gifts of ministry would be evident, even from that time in which he was called. He

would have to confront the very man who was teaching him in the ministry that God was not pleased with him. Verse 16 says, "Then Eli called Samuel and said, 'Samuel my son!' "He answered, 'Here I am.'" "And he said, 'What is the word that the Lord spoke to you?' "Please do not hide it from me." And we see here that Samuel was faithful to his call; both in terms of his salvation and in terms of his future ministry. The child's call to minister, here, was an extraordinary one, and not like anyone's call today. But we must insist that a call today may still bring a sword into a household because of the truth. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 10: 34 - "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth." "I came not to bring peace but a sword." "For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be those of his own household." "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me." "And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of ME." "And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me." "He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it." Samuel was called to take the Lord's side against the sins of Eli and his household.

Let me ask this morning if this is something that we realize that we must do when we come to Christ? We are called to take our stand for truth and for righteousness in relation to everyone around us, and especially those of our own household and our closest friends. It is indeed a matter of loving God first and foremostly, above all friends and relations. It is only if you have the grace of God at work in your soul that you are able to do this. Are you willing to be baptized in profession of your faith in Christ, even if when, after you have believed, that you call your mother on the phone to ask her to come to your baptism, that she hangs up on you? This is what happened to me my dear friends, but I shall never regret having asked her to come. She needed to know the truth about her need to be converted to Christ. She believed that she was saved by her baptism and her good works in relation to helping other people. But she did not believe that she needed to be saved from her sins. O may each of you who have said that you believe in Christ never be afraid or ashamed to confess the truth about your need to have been converted to Him. Why did you need Christ if you were all right like you were; going to church, but pursuing the things of the world more? No, the most religious, church going, moral person that lives still needs to be converted to Christ! And this we must tell our children. And this is where we will take our stand. The baptism of infants will not save them. The baptism and confirmation of adults will not do it either. Ceremonial works of baptism and the Lord's Supper save not a single soul without faith in the blood and death of our Lord Jesus. And you and I should have the courage to say so. And this leads me to the last lesson that we can learn from Samuel's being effectually called of God:

4thly - You should not hide from your family and your church what the Lord has done for you. (Verses 15-21)

"So Samuel lay down until morning and then opened the doors of the house of the Lord." He thought much about the matter. He feared to tell Eli the words that He had heard from God. It would mean judgment to Eli's house. He revered and respected Eli. But being exhorted to it, he finally told Eli everything it says in verse 18. Let me apply this word of the Lord, in closing, in this way. If Samuel did not hide from Eli the words of judgment given to him by the Lord, should you, even as a young person, hide from your parents or elders what the Lord has gloriously done for you in changing your heart and mind and calling you to Himself? No, if we truly believe we will speak. We will declare what the Lord has done for our souls. Psalm 66: 16 says, "Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will declare what He has done for my soul." "I cried to Him with my mouth, and He was extolled with my tongue." If we believe we will be willing to go in obedience to the Lord's command, into the waters of believer's baptism and declare it publicly before the congregation. Remember again, the words of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 10: 32 - "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father in heaven." "But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven." How do you confess Christ after you have first believed? You do it in by telling others of what He has done for your soul in saving you from your sins. How do you do it according to His command. By submitting your testimony to the church and letting others know and see what the grace of God has done for you to change you into a person who loves His word, and desires to keep it. Arise and be baptized and declare what God has done for your soul. It is your faith that saves you, and it is your faith that leads you to confession of Christ publicly. May the Lord save each and every one of you children and young people who hear God's word from week to week. May the Lord savingly call you to Himself. This is what we pray for, and this is our desire; that each person here would follow Him in according to the truth of His Word. "Samuel grew and the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. So He will be with those whom He has called. "He who has begun a good work in you will perfect until the day of Christ." (Philippians 1: 6)