

*The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 15 May 2022. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced, and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.*

## **The Faith of a Priest**

### **Hebrews 11:32**

Back in the 1740's and 50's, a phenomenon called "The Great Awakening" occurred in both England and America. Through the preaching of mighty men of God such as Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield, many thousands of people passed from spiritual death to spiritual life. In the early 1800's, there was another great revival called the "Second Great Awakening" in America; and in Europe, many people turned to the Lord through the Pietist movement. In the late 1800's, and into the early 1900's, there continued to be periodic times of revival in America and Europe through the preaching of men such as Spurgeon, Moody, and Sunday. Even in the 60's and 70's, there were still revival services in local churches, which lasted for weeks. I still remember revival services in the early 80's which lasted up to two weeks; and not a few people would get saved during those days.

Sad to say, revival services today usually are not the large Gospel outreaches to the community that they once were; instead, the preaching is usually geared toward those who are already saved. Now, there certainly is nothing wrong with revival services' being geared toward the saved. In fact, that's the way it *should* be. Revival *should* begin with God's people! The problem is that by and large, Christians today are not *responding* to revival preaching, as Christians in past generations did, because they are too preoccupied with things of this world. We may hold "revival services" all we want; but if God's people will not get broken about their sin, and truly turn from their wickedness, and fully surrender themselves to God, little will happen.

You see, **revival** isn't merely a week of special services, with a special guest preacher. Revival isn't even a large Gospel outreach to lost people. Revival, in its true, biblical sense, is *God's people* confessing their sin, surrendering to the Lord, and letting Him have full control of their lives again. Revival is something that should be taking place in the hearts of God's people *continually*. When we cast out every last "idol" from our hearts, God is able to use us as clean vessels to do His will.

When a believer is experiencing revival in his own heart, he is able to do two things. First, he is able to **encourage other believers** to live for God. Secondly, he is empowered **to win the lost**. Why do we usually think of a "revival" as a time when lost people are saved? Because *evangelization of the lost* is the natural fruit of *revival in believers' hearts*. When *God's people* get right with Him, they start getting serious about winning the lost; and with the power of the Holy Spirit upon them, they begin to see a harvest of souls.

However, we must never forget where revival starts. It starts with **faith**. **Faith** is the foundation of Christian growth. As a Christian's faith increases, revival *will* take place in his heart. Why? Because trust in God and trust in "idols" cannot co-exist in your heart! As a Christian submits to God, the idols are broken down. The believer then goes out and starts to influence *others* to cast out the idols in *their* heart.

The man whose faith we will be studying today had that kind of faith. His name is **Samuel**. Samuel served God as a prophet, priest, and judge of Israel for many years. If I could describe his faith with one word, I would say that Samuel had "**a reviving faith**." As we look into God's Word this morning, we will see how God used Samuel's faith to bring great *revival* to the people of Israel. We will also see how the Lord can bring revival to *our* hearts, and then use us to bring revival to others.

The title of this message is ***The Faith of a Priest***.

## Read Hebrews 11:32.

I would like to point out four products of Samuel's faith. First of all, Samuel's faith produced:

### I. A willingness to answer God's call

Samuel was a man who was greatly used of God. Through his faithful preaching and teaching, and his holy example, the hearts of Israel were turned to God *en masse*; and God began to free them from their bondage to the Philistines. However, what we often forget about Samuel is that his faith was molded by a godly mother. Before Samuel was conceived, his mother, Hannah, was distressed because of her barrenness; and in her distress, she vowed to the LORD that if He would give her a son, she would lend him to the LORD for as long as he lived. Well, the LORD granted her request, and gave her a son; and Hannah paid up on her vow. When Samuel was still a very young lad, she took him to the Tabernacle, and left him in the custody of Eli, the high priest, so that he could serve in the Tabernacle as a priest for the rest of his life.

Little did Hannah realise, as she blinked through her tears, and waved goodbye to her little son, that he would become one of the greatest prophets that Israel had ever seen. The irony of it is that Samuel was trained and mentored by a high priest who was very out of touch with God. The LORD was extremely displeased with Eli, because he had not brought up his own two sons, Hophni and Phineas, to know and love Jehovah. Furthermore, he had allowed them to be priests, even though he knew that they were committing adultery, and defrauding the people. Many people in Israel were turning away from God because they were disgusted by the sacrilege of Eli's sons; yet, he did nothing about it. (In fact, he indirectly benefitted from their theft.) Eli was a true believer; but because of his unfaithfulness, God had not given any revelations to Israel for a long time; and God would not speak directly to Eli anymore!

It was in the midst of these sad circumstances that God first spoke to young Samuel.

### Read 1 Samuel 3:1-13.

This was the beginning of Samuel's ministry as a prophet. Ironically, it was Eli who instructed young Samuel to do what he himself had *not* truly done for quite some time. He instructed Samuel to say, "***Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth.***"

This should be the prayer of every believer. Every day of our Christian lives we should be saying, "***Speak, LORD, for thy servant heareth.***" However, merely *saying the words* "***Speak LORD, for thy servant heareth***" is not enough. Many Christians offer up prayers to God, both publicly and privately, in which they ask God to speak to them; but God *isn't* speaking to them. Their spiritual life is dry, and their prayers seem to be rising no higher than the ceiling. Why? Because they are not truly *hearing* Him. They are not truly *listening* to Him. They cannot hear God, because their hearts are filled with love of other things.

No doubt Eli had noticed, long before he met Samuel, that God was not speaking *to* him, nor *through* him; and he was probably bothered by this silence. When you examine Eli's life, you can see that there *was* a certain amount of spiritual tenderness in his heart, and a deep regret that he had not been a faithful priest and father. I wouldn't doubt that Eli himself had uttered these very words, "***Speak, LORD, for thy servant heareth***" many times. Yet, God *didn't* speak to him. Why? Because he did not truly have the heart attitude of being willing to answer God's call. He had regret, but not submissiveness. He had not answered God's call to raise his sons in the fear of

the LORD; and he was living in a continual state of rebellion against God's call by allowing his wicked sons to be in positions of spiritual leadership. How, then, could he expect God to speak to him?

Young Samuel, on the other hand, had a different attitude. Even at his young age, Samuel already had a personal, loving relationship with the Lord. In **verse 7**, we are told that Samuel "***did not yet know the LORD***"; however, this doesn't mean that Samuel wasn't saved, or that he didn't have a relationship with God. This simply means that he did not yet know the LORD's *voice*, in the sense that a prophet would know it. This was the first time that God had spoken to Samuel in an *audible* voice, to give him a divine revelation. However, Samuel clearly *knew* the Lord personally, and had a tender heart toward Him. Because he trusted the LORD, his heart was not filled with earthly things, as Eli's was. His was a heart in which the LORD was able to move, and to which He was able to speak.

Are you walking by faith, Christian? If you are, then you will have a willingness to answer God's call. The very essence of faith is that you are ready and willing to do whatever God commands. Real faith means "giving yourself first to the Lord."

### **Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-5.**

In this portion of Paul's letter to the church of Corinth, he was holding up the believers of Macedonia as an example of Christ-like, sacrificial giving; and he urged the Christians in Corinth to follow their example. The Macedonian Christians had heard about the great need of their brethren in Judaea, who were suffering from famine, and from persecution; and they dug deep into their pockets in order to send aid to them. *The Macedonian Christians themselves* were poverty-stricken and persecuted; yet, they gave beyond their power. Why did they have such a sacrificial attitude? Paul says that it was because they "***first gave their own selves to the Lord.***"

If God really has *you*, then He will have your wallet. If the Lord really has *you*, then He will have your labour. If the Lord really has *you*, then He will have your hands, and feet, and tongue, and mouth. **If He really has you, then He will have your whole life.** It doesn't matter if the issue is tithing, or giving to missions, or witnessing to the lost, or abandoning a sin in your life, or surrendering to be a pastor or missionary, or doing some other service to God: the first and foremost question is, "Have you *first* given yourself to the Lord?" It must *always* start with Him. Do you have the heart attitude that is willing to say "Speak, Lord" as soon as He calls?

Samuel's faith produced a willingness to answer God's call. But what else did it produce? Samuel's faith also produced....

## **II. A willingness to take hard stands**

There were a lot of "hard stands" that Samuel had to take during his ministry; but it didn't begin in his adulthood. It began when he was still a child! Let's look at Samuel's first hard stand.

### **Read 1 Samuel 3:11-19.**

Can you imagine being in Samuel's shoes? He was just a child, and Eli was an old man. Not only that, but Eli was the high priest and judge of Israel! The fact that *Samuel* received a message from the LORD, when Eli had *not* received a message from the LORD for a long time, shows that the LORD considered *Samuel*, not Eli, to be worthy of the office of priest and prophet! Do you see why Samuel felt intimidated about delivering this message to Eli? For the rest of the night, he

was probably wondering, “How will Eli react to this message? What will I say when Eli asks me to tell him what the LORD said?” Though the LORD never actually *told* Samuel that he was to deliver this message to Eli, Samuel knew, in his heart, that that was exactly what God wanted him to do. God didn’t give him this message for nothing. God’s prophets cannot keep silent: they *must* speak God’s words. By the way, the Hebrew word for “prophet” is based upon the word *nava*, which literally means “to bubble over, or belch out.” The idea is that the prophet cannot keep silent: he must “belch out” the word of the Lord, whether he wants to do so or not!

The next morning, when Eli explicitly commanded Samuel to tell him everything that the LORD had told him, there was no doubt what he was to do. For the first time in his life, Samuel had to decide: “**Do I want man’s approval, or God’s approval?** Will I alter God’s message, so that Eli won’t think ill of me? Or will I say exactly what God told me to say?”

This was a question that Samuel had to ask himself throughout his life. For example, when the people of Israel demanded that Samuel anoint a king to rule over them, Samuel had to stand against the whole nation, and tell them that they were rebelling against God! (Imagine you *versus* about 4,000,000 people!) Rather than go along with the people’s wish, he solemnly protested to them, and delivered God’s message. He told them that their kings would become tyrants, and would oppress them (which, in fact, they did). **Samuel wasn’t interested in the people’s smiles and approval: he was interested in obeying God.** A few years later, when King Saul unlawfully intruded into the office of priest by offering a sacrifice for the people, Samuel bluntly told him that God had rejected him; that his kingdom would be taken away from him; and that the kingdom would be given to a man better than he. He pointed his bony finger at Saul and said, “**For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry!**” How about when God commanded Samuel to anoint David as the next king of Israel? Even Samuel was a little nervous about that assignment! He asked the LORD, “**How can I go? If Saul hear it, he will kill me.**” Yet, Samuel obeyed God.

The decision of whether to seek man’s approval or God’s approval is one that every believer must make every day. Every child of God must take “hard stands” for Him! If you are walking by faith, there *will* be confrontations in your life. You will have to confront non-believers who despise God’s Word, and tell them that they must repent and believe on Jesus. You will have to confront false brethren, and inform them that they are trusting in a false gospel. You will even have to confront true brothers or sisters in Christ who are sinning against the Lord. And guess what? Many people will *not* speak well of you. Our Lord assured us of this!

### **Read Luke 6:26.**

Any truth worth believing is worth proclaiming. This starts with the Gospel message. Are you intimidated about delivering the Gospel to people, Christian? Are there certain people who intimidate you—such as a family member, classmate, or co-worker who you fear might turn against you if you talk to him about Jesus; a teacher at school, or a boss at work; a doctor or professional friend who has much more education than you do; or a mean-looking dude who looks as though he’ll rip your face off if you dare to quote a Scripture to him? Well, guess what? I have those kinds of fears, too. Yet, what has God promised us? God says that He has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind (**2 Timothy 1:7**). It doesn’t matter how young are old you may be: God promises to be with you always, and to give you a mouth and wisdom, which no one can resist. The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, who was a very young man at the time, “**Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity**” (**1 Timothy 4:12**).

Do all men speak well of you, Christian? If so, that's not a good sign! Yes, we are commanded, as much as lieth in us, to live peaceably with all men (**Romans 12:18**). **However, peace must never come at the expense of truth.** Peace often *ends* the moment you try to proclaim hard truth to someone. Proclamation of truth even causes division among true Christians. For this reason, many Christians do *not* take those hard stands. They even cloak their failure to proclaim the truth in a false mantel of virtue. For example, they say, "I just mind my own business," or "I don't want to be divisive. After all, we should endeavour to keep 'unity in the body of Christ,' right? Let's just keep the main thing the main thing, and not get controversial. Let's just talk about Jesus, and not doctrine." Tragically, many Christians are being drawn to wishy-washy churches that say these kinds of things. Why? Because it's *comfortable*. These churches do not require separation from false doctrine; and they are not confrontational about sin. The attitude is, "Let's just all get along. Anything that's divisive is bad. Let's not talk about dress, or music, or Bible versions, or movies, or entertainment, or social drinking; and let's not take any particular position on baptism, or gifts of the Spirit, or ecumenicalism." Brethren, if talking about "controversial" things is "bad," then the Bible is "bad"—because it is *extremely* divisive! The Bible is full of doctrine; and doctrine divides! Get used to it, Christian: if you stand for the truth, you will not be loved by everyone! Even your loved ones may get angry with you.

Samuel lay awake all night thinking about the message he had to deliver to the man whom he had come to love and respect as a father; and if *you* love the Lord, there will be such nights for you, too. Perhaps there is an "Eli" in your life who desperately needs to hear truth; but you are afraid to tell him. Do you love that person? Do you love the Lord? Do you believe that God will give you the grace to do what He has commanded, in a spirit of meekness and humility?

Samuel's faith produced a willingness to answer God's call, and to take hard stands. It also produced...

### III. A willingness to pour out his life for others

When Samuel was an old man, his heart was broken by two pieces of information. First of all, he was informed that his own sons, whom he had made judges, were taking bribes, and were unworthy of the office. However, what broke his heart even more was that the children of Israel used his sons' misconduct as an excuse to demand a king, like all the other nations had.

Why was this such a blow to Samuel? Because all his life, Samuel had been teaching the children of Israel to trust in *God*. He had taught them that *Jehovah* was their King, and that if they would simply trust in Him and obey His covenant, *He* would protect them. Through Samuel, the nation had experienced true revival. When they repented, they saw God's miraculous deliverance from the Philistines. Yet, in the end, they rebelled against Samuel's word, and against God's Word; and they demanded their own humanistic solution to their problems.

**Read 1 Samuel 8:1-22.**

**Read 1 Samuel 12:3-5, 16-23.**

What do you do when you have tirelessly poured yourself out in service to God and others; yet, in the end, not only do the people whom you have served *not thank you* for your love and service, but they turn against you, and give you a quick kick in the gut? Do you "throw in the towel" and say, "Well, if that's the thanks I get, I'm not going to serve God anymore"? Unfortunately, that is precisely the way many Christians react.

But Samuel didn't. He continued to plead with the people, and to tell the people exactly what God told him to say. He continued to serve the people selflessly, and to pray for them. **That is the attitude that the Apostle Paul had, as well.** He had poured his life into the believers in the church of Corinth. He had personally led many of them to the Lord. Yet, after he had been gone for a little while, what did he find out? Not only were they permitting a gross sin in their midst, but they were bickering and fighting with each other, and abusing their spiritual gifts. Some of them were even questioning that Paul was a legitimate apostle, because they had listened to false teachers who hated Paul! Yet, what was his response to this? Let's take a look.

#### **Read 2 Corinthians 12:14-15.**

When you pour out yourself in service to Christ and others, you may be sure that there will be times when you are criticised by the most unlikely people. Remember Mary of Bethany, who poured out a pound of costly spikenard on Jesus' head, to show her love for Him? That spikenard was worth 300 Roman *dinari*—nearly a year's wages for the average person in those days. *That* was a sacrifice! Yet, what did Jesus' disciples say about this? At the instigation of Judas (who was a false believer), they began to criticize her. They accused her of being wasteful. Imagine that! Yet, what did Jesus say? He said, ***“Why trouble ye the woman? For she hath wrought a good work on me... Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.”***

Those who walk by faith will not be offended if they feel that they have not received much thanks for their service. They will continue to spend, and be spent, and pour themselves out for Christ and others, because what they do is not really for men, but for the Lord! The Bible says, ***“And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men” (Colossians 3:23)***. God is keeping track of your service, Christian. If you are truly doing it for the Lord, and not because you “have to,” you will receive reward—no matter how small, thankless, or seemingly unimportant that task may be. Cleaning the church; washing the dishes after a fellowship meal; teaching the God's Word to the precious little ones in crèche; driving someone to or from church; taking time that you could have spent for yourself to teach your children God's Word; knocking on doors, passing out that tract, or attempting to witness to someone who doesn't appreciate what you are doing; giving that special offering to the Lord when you didn't have much money—all these “small” things *will* be brought into the light one day; and you *will* be rewarded, if you did it for love of Christ. The Bible says, ***“Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday” (Psalm 37:5-6)***.

Samuel's faith produced a willingness to answer God's call; a willingness to take hard stands; and a willingness to pour out his life to others. Lastly, Samuel's faith produced...

#### **IV. A willingness to call people to repentance**

In **Proverbs 11:30**, we are told, ***“The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.”*** Samuel truly was a “tree of life.” Many souls in Samuel's day were won to Jehovah, and many names were not blotted out of the Book of Life, because of his faith. He wasn't content simply to do his basic duties as a priest, and “call it a day.” He got out of his comfort zone. He taught people God's Word, and called the people of Israel to repentance.

Samuel lived in a day of great apostasy. The children of Israel outwardly professed the worship of Jehovah; but idol worship was everywhere. Moreover, the national morale of Israel was at an all-time low. When Samuel was still a young man, the children of Israel, thinking that the Ark of

the Covenant was some kind of magic charm that could protect them, took the Ark with them into battle with the Philistines; and God allowed them to be utterly defeated, and the Ark to be stolen by the Philistines. God had specifically commanded Israel *not* to take the Ark with them in battle; but they either were so biblically illiterate that they were unaware of this command, or they didn't care. Yet, Eli didn't stop them from doing it! To add to this catastrophe, Eli, the spiritual leader of Israel, died when he heard the tragic news of the Ark's disappearance. Now, God did protect the Ark. He sent plagues on the Philistines over a period of several months, until they finally returned the Ark back to Israel on a cart. However, when the Israelites saw the Ark, they touched it, and opened the lid, contrary to God's command; and 50,070 Israelites were smitten by God!

After this, the Israelites were so afraid of their own Ark, that they wouldn't even take it back to the Tabernacle. It was hidden away for twenty years in the house of a priest who lived in Kirjath-jearim. Meanwhile, Israel continued to be oppressed by the Philistines. It seems that God—and Samuel, as well—allowed the Ark to remain hidden away in order to teach the people that they needed to turn to the *God* of Israel, and not trust in a golden box. Though God had ordained the Ark of the Covenant for worship, they were treating it like an idol. God only protects people when they genuinely repent and turn to him, and cast out all idols from their lives.

### **Read 1 Samuel 7:1-14.**

You know, our day is no different than Samuel's day. Apostasy abounds everywhere. Countless churches that once preached the Gospel preach doctrines of devils, while still giving lip service to the name of Christ. As for our Western culture as a whole, it isn't merely "post-Christian"; it is utterly pagan and satanic. Worst of all, in the midst of this spiritual darkness, multitudes of genuine, born-again Christians are spiritually fat, lazy, and apathetic. They do their basic "duty" of going to church once per week, but little more. Multitudes of Christians couldn't even open their Bible and lead someone to the Lord if their lives depended on it. Meanwhile, the cults are dazzling people with their superficial, yet seemingly impressive, knowledge of the Bible; and many spiritually starving people are turning down these false paths.

The need for "Samuels" today is greater than it ever was before. It is time for Christians to wake up, and to start living by faith. Before we can expect lost souls to be saved, God's people *must* repent of their own selfishness, pride, and apathy toward God. Will *you* be that "tree of life," Christian?

Maybe you're thinking, "Yes, Pastor, I'd like to be that kind of person; but Samuel was a priest. I'm not a pastor, or missionary, or anything like that." If that's what you are thinking, I have news for you: being a "Samuel" isn't merely for pastors and missionaries. *All* Christians are "priests before God." We *all* have a responsibility to intercede for others in prayer. We *all* have the responsibility to call the lost to be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. We *all* have the responsibility to serve God's people. Will you trust the LORD to make you such a person? Will you let the LORD start a revival in you?

**Conclusion:** We've hit on some hard truths today. How will you respond to them? Christian, is it your desire to be a "Samuel"? Will you allow God to increase your faith, so that you will be willing to answer His call? Will you, by faith, take hard stands for truth; pour out your life in service to Christ, and to others; and call people to repentance? Is it your desire to be a "tree of life" in a world that is dying? If so, why not talk with the Lord about it this morning, and ask the Lord to revive you again?

If you are not sure that you are saved, please do not put off that decision! Religion can't save you. *Jesus Christ*, not religion, is the Saviour. He paid the price for your sin in full, and left nothing for you to pay. To

say that you are good enough to get to Heaven is to say that Jesus Christ's death on the cross was not necessary. My friend, it *is* necessary. Jesus' blood is the *only* remedy for sin. If you will come forward in the invitation this morning, I will gladly show you from the Scriptures exactly how you may have full assurance that your soul is saved!