

HEROES OF THE FAITH, THEN AND NOW

Samuel - Well Planned

TEXT: Heb. 11:32

Hebrews 11:32 *And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets:*

Introduction: Once again we must go outside the immediate boundaries of our text in Heb. 11 to look at the hero of the faith whom we will consider today. His name is Samuel, and it is in the first portion of the two books that bear his name that we find his wonderful and inspiring story

I. SAMUEL WAS A PLANNED CHILD.

A. By his parents (1 Sam. 1-2)

B. By God

1. Not enough for Elkanah and Hannah to plan.
2. God had to plan.
 - a. **God planned Samuel as the last and greatest of the judges.**
 - b. **God planned Samuel as His prophet.**
 - c. **God planned Samuel to guide Israel into the first days of the kingship.**
 - d. **Samuel was not the circumstantial product of a biological event.**

God planned Samuel, and

C. God planned you!

How do you know? I was born late in marriage; my parents called me an accident.
 I was born too early in marriage; my parents called me a mistake.
 I was born when economic conditions weren't right; my parents called me an added expense.
 I was born when things were tough; my parents called me trouble.

I do not have to know about the circumstances of your birth to know that God planned you. I know it because the Bible says it.

1. Children are a gift from God.

Gen. 4:1, 25 ¹ Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, "I have acquired a man from the LORD." ²⁵ And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and named him Seth, "For God has appointed another seed for me instead of Abel, whom Cain killed."

2. The Lord opens and closes the womb.

Gen. 30:2 And Jacob's anger was aroused against Rachel, and he said, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?"

Ruth 4:13 So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife; and when he went in to her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bore a son.

- a. The closing of the womb is not always a punishment from the Lord.
- b. Karen and I were 11 years without children. We adopted; 2 wks later, Karen got pregnant.
- c. Biblically, a closed womb often precedes the birth of someone who will be greatly used of God: for example, Joseph, Samuel, and John the Baptist

3. God's plan begins before conception.

Jer. 1:5 "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations."

This is one of the tragedies of abortion. It is not only murder of an innocent life, it is saying to God, "Your plans for this person are not important."

One of the arguments used by the proponents of the culture of death is to say that they are preserving "quality of life." They want to kill unborn babies that exhibit evidence of some handicap in the womb because they will not have "quality of life."

God says, "You leave that little one alone, and allow Me into his life, and I will show you a new meaning of quality of life. My relationship with him," says the Lord "is more important than intellect, eyes, hands, feet, anything and everything. You allow him to get in on my plan and his life will be quality for eternity."

A lot of people can be glad that God does not destroy all people who do not have good quality of life as God counts quality. A lot of so called normal people would be wiped out!

Instead the Lord says to us all, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." Quality of life is not in the externals but in a relationship with Jesus Christ.

D. The circumstances of your birth are irrelevant.

E. Neither are difficulties in life any sign that God does not have a plan for your life.

In a famous study by Victor and Mildred Goertzel, entitled Cradles of Eminence, the home backgrounds of 300 highly successful people were investigated. These 300 subjects had made it to the top. They were men and women whose names everyone would recognize as brilliant in their fields, such as Franklin D. Roosevelt, Helen Keller, Winston Churchill, Albert Schweitzer, Clara Barton, Gandhi, Einstein, and Freud. The intensive investigation into their early home lives yielded some surprising findings:

* Three fourths of the children were troubled either by poverty, by a broken home, or by rejecting, over-possessive, or dominating parents.

* Seventy-four of 85 writers of fiction or drama and 16 of the 20 poets came from homes where, as children, they saw tense psychological drama played out by their parents.

* Physical handicaps such as blindness, deafness, or crippled limbs characterized over one-fourth of the sample.

And yet from such poor circumstances, God was able to bring success.

Helen Keller was blind, deaf, and unable to speak and at age five was a strong willed, wild animal like girl with no way to communicate her thoughts and feelings. But she graduated college summa cum laude and was able to read French, German Latin, Greek, and English!

Theodore Roosevelt was a sickly child plagued by violent attacks of asthma. At their peak they came every four to five days. But it was this same Teddy who led the Rough Riders up San Juan Hill and later became the 26th President of the United States.

Winston Churchill, known throughout the world for his eloquence and pithy speech used his tongue as England's strongest weapon to bear up under the unrelenting attack of the air raids and buzz bombs devastating London.

Some of you remember hearing and others reading his words that fortified the British people:

Hitler knows that he will have to break us in this island or lose the war. If we can stand up to him, all Europe may be free, and life of the world may move forward into broad, sunlit uplands. But if we fall, then the whole world, including the United States, including all that we have known and cared for, will sink into the abyss of a new Dark Age... Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, 'This was their finest hour.'

Undoubtedly you know other famous remarks from this remarkable man, but what you may not know is that young Winston stammered in his speech, and only through great patience and practice did he overcome this childhood handicap.

How easily men could have concluded of any of these great men and women that God was absent from their lives and they themselves absent from His plans. But the Bible declares and history has proved how wrong they would have been.

God planned each of them.

God had a plan for each of them.

And my friend,

God planned you as He planned Samuel.

II. SAMUEL WORKED THE PLAN.

A. He listened when God called.

1 Sam. 3:10 Now the LORD came and stood and called as at other times, “Samuel! Samuel!” And Samuel answered, “Speak, for Your servant hears.”

B. He obeyed, even in the tough things.

1. Message to Eli - 1 Sam 3:11-14
2. Message to Saul - 1 Sam. 15:22,3

C. He did not allow excuses to deter him from following the plan of God.

1. not opposition: Hophni and Phinehas
2. not a lack of popularity or cooperation - people wanted a king
3. not the difficulty of the task

There was a ten-year-old boy who decided to study judo, despite the fact that he had lost his left arm in a devastating car accident. The boy began lessons with an old Japanese judo master. The boy was doing well, so he couldn't understand why, after three months of training, the master had taught him only one move.

“Master,” the boy finally said, “shouldn't I be learning more moves?”

“I realize that this is the only move you know, but this may be the only move you'll ever need to know,” the master replied.

Not quite understanding, but believing in his teacher, the boy kept training.

Several months later, the master took the boy to his first tournament. Surprising himself, the boy easily won his first two matches. The third match proved to be more difficult, but after some time, his opponent became impatient and charged. The boy deftly used his one move to win the match. Still amazed by his success, the boy made the finals. This time, his opponent was bigger, stronger, and more experienced. For a while, the boy appeared to be overmatched. Concerned that the boy might get hurt, the referee called a time-out. He was about to stop the match when the master intervened.

“No,” the master insisted. “Let him continue.”

As soon as the match resumed, his opponent rushed in on him. Instantly, the boy used his move to pin him. The boy won the match and the tournament. He was now the champion.

On the way home, the boy and master reviewed every move in each and every match. Then the boy summoned the courage to ask what was really on his mind.

“Master, how could I possibly have won that tournament with only one move?”

The master turned to the boy and answered, “You won for two reasons. First, you have been able to master the most difficult throw in all of judo. And second, the only known defense for that move that you have mastered is for your opponent to grab your left arm.”

The boy’s biggest weakness had become his biggest strength. (By Robert Vogel)

Conclusion:

1. Did you know that God planned you and has a plan for you? Or have you thought of your life and yourself as an accident, a circumstance, and just trying to get by the best you can.

Say to the Lord today, “God, I no longer believe what I’ve heard or I’ve thought or felt; I believe what your Word says. You planned me; you have a plan for me. I want to work that plan.”

2. Are you working God’s plan?
 - a. Saved?
 - b. In the church?
 - c. Growing?
 - d. Serving?