

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

AUGUST 19TH-20TH, 2023 // 1 SAMUEL

SPEAK, LORD... (1 SAMUEL 3:1-10)

Some time has passed, and Samuel has grown since his parents left him at Shiloh.

- Most scholars estimate that Samuel was around 10-12 years of age.
- Even though corruption in the house of God was rampant, Samuel "served the Lord" ---he was a young man of integrity, purity, obedience, and faithfulness.

In those days, the word of the Lord and prophetic visions were rare (vs. 1)---God's silence was a result of His divine judgment on Israel (Amos 8:11-12).

- God no longer sent His people signs and prophetic messages as He once did because of their sin, unwillingness to listen, and their hardness of heart (Ps. 74:9, Ezek. 7:26).
- Even the Tabernacle had become a place of sin!

In the early morning hours ("before the lamp of God had gone out"), Eli was asleep, and Samuel lay sleeping near the place where the ark of God was located (vs. 3).

- God called to Samuel in an audible voice, but Samuel thought it was Eli (vs. 4-6).
- Twice Samuel ran to Eli thinking that he was calling because he didn't know what God's voice sounded like yet (vs. 7).

Samuel was a godly and obedient young man, but he hadn't yet had an encounter with the presence and glory of God.

- God wanted to reveal Himself to Samuel in a personal way and entrust His Word to someone who pursued the heart and mind of God (1 Sam. 2:35).
- God desires to speak to us and reveal Himself to us in personal ways---are we listening?

By the third time God spoke to Samuel, Eli understood that it was the Lord calling the boy (vs. 8).

- Eli directed Samuel to go back to bed and wait to see if God called him again. If God did call him, he was to respond, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening" (vs. 9).
- Samuel was to wait on the Lord and make himself available for God to speak ("go and lie down").

If God did speak to him, Samuel was to respond to the Lord with a willing, receptive, and humble heart ("Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening").

- Samuel went back to bed, and the Lord appeared. There was a visible manifestation of the presence of God, and Samuel again heard his name called (vs. 10).
- This time, Samuel responded as he was instructed to respond.

GOD SPEAKS THROUGH HIS WORD (THE BIBLE).

Scripture is God's primary way of communicating to us---it helps us understand and confirm God's voice.

- "A lamp for my feet and a light on my path" (Ps. 119:105)---we can't see reality clearly unless God's Word illuminates it for us daily through Scripture.
- The Holy Spirit makes the Bible come alive (Heb. 4:12).

GOD SPEAKS THROUGH HIS PEOPLE.

Col. 3:16-17 says that the people of God are to teach and admonish one another as we encourage and remind each other about Jesus and His truth lived out in our lives.

- God speaks to us through godly counsel, wisdom from more mature/older believers, and encouragement from others He's placed in our lives.

GOD SPEAKS THROUGH CIRCUMSTANCES.

In Acts 16:6-7, Paul was trying to travel to different places, but when his way was blocked, he concluded that God was the one who had directed them not to go.

- Sometimes God reveals His will for our lives by closing doors and opening doors.
- God can allow certain circumstances in our lives to communicate with us, and we need to pray to ask Him what lesson He is teaching us in them.

GOD SPEAKS THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Some may disagree, but Biblically speaking, there is no reason for us to believe that God stopped communicating with His people as He once did.

- God still reveals His will and speaks to His people---we must be careful to be discerning and verify what we think we're hearing (1 Thess. 5:20-21).
- Whose voice are we hearing in our hearts and minds? Ours? The enemy's? The Lord's?

BARRIERS TO HEARING GOD'S VOICE.

- Sin (3:1)---sin separates us from fellowship with the Lord and deadens our conscience.
- Unwillingness/hardness of heart (Jer. 7:13).
- Inexperience (3:7)---we don't know when God is speaking to us because we're still growing in our knowledge of God and how He speaks.
- Expectation (3:9-10)---some of us don't hear God because we're not expecting Him to speak.

THE WORD OF THE LORD (1 SAMUEL 3:11-21)

The message that God spoke to Samuel confirmed the prophetic judgment upon the house of Eli that was delivered previously by an unnamed prophet (vs. 11-14, 2:27-36).

- Just as God promised, He would destroy Eli's lineage because of the sin of Eli's sons and the enabling, permissive negligence of Eli in allowing it to happen (vs. 13).
- The family had been warned, but it was too late.

There are many people who want to hear a word from God, but what if God tells you something that's painful and difficult to hear?

- Most times, when the word of the Lord came to prophets in the Bible, it was a message of judgment (Jer. 1:4-19).
- A sign of false prophets in the Bible is when they simply told the people exactly what they wanted to hear (Jer. 23:21-30, 1 Kings 22).

Samuel received a disturbing revelation from God concerning judgment on Eli's house, and he was afraid to tell Eli what God revealed to him (vs. 15).

- Nevertheless, Eli wanted to know what God said (vs. 16-17).
- The Lord said that there could be no atonement made for Eli's sin---judgment was sealed, and Eli accepted responsibility (vs. 18).

We cannot be timid in sharing the difficult truths of the word of the Lord.

- God's word tells us that Jesus died on the cross to save us from our sins and that we can

- receive salvation and experience eternity with God.
- But God's word also tells us that we must repent of our sins---many of the things our world tells us are perfectly acceptable are the things that God clearly calls sin.

God's word also tells us that refusing to turn from our sin and rejecting Christ ends in eternal judgment and punishment in hell.

- There are many false prophets in our day that simply tell people whatever they want to hear---whether it be that their sinful lifestyle is acceptable in God's sight or that their preferred political candidate is God's chosen one.

"How long will this continue in the hearts of these lying prophets, who prophesy the delusions of their own minds?...Therefore," declares the Lord, "I am against the prophets who steal from one another words supposedly from me." (Jeremiah 23:26, 30, NIV)

- Beware of the voices that supposedly speak the words of God but only tell you what you want to hear. They could be lying, false prophets.

Samuel grew, and the Lord was with Him (vs. 19).

- Everything that Samuel prophesied came to pass because Samuel only spoke that which the Lord revealed to him to speak.
- All across the land of Israel, Samuel began to be known as a "confirmed prophet of the Lord."
- God was raising up Samuel to be a spiritual leader for His people who would listen for God's voice and boldly speak what the Lord gave him.

As Samuel continued to listen and act in obedience to the word of the Lord, God continued to appear to him in Shiloh and speak (vs. 21).

- God speaks to us clearly and regularly through the Scriptures. God can also speak through His people, circumstances, and the Holy Spirit.
- If we want to hear God's voice, we must listen and act in obedience to what we've already heard.

GOD IS ALIVE AND ACTIVE IN OUR WORLD.

- There are many Christians who are functional deists---they act as if God set everything in order and then stepped back, distant and removed, watching but not necessarily involved with the day-to-day activities of the world.
- Supernatural revelation, miracles, divine intervention, and God speaking to us personally are dismissed as wishful thinking.

GOD STILL SPEAKS TO THOSE WHO LISTEN.

- God still speaks to us through Scripture, other people, circumstances, and the Holy Spirit.
- The problem isn't that God stopped speaking; it's that we've stopped listening. The word of the Lord can become rare in our lives.
- Sin, an unwilling/hardened heart, inexperience/immaturity, and a lack of expectation and faith prevent us from hearing God.

THOSE WHO SEEK TO LISTEN TO GOD'S VOICE MUST BE DISCERNING.

- If you want to know and become familiar with God's voice, open your Bible daily and read with an expectant, humble heart.
- If you want to know and become familiar with God's voice, be still, get quiet, and go to Him in prayer. A wise way to discern what we think we've heard from God is through community.

GOD SPEAKS TRUTH: NOT JUST EASY MESSAGES THAT WE WANT TO BE TRUE.

- A word from God that never challenges our preconceptions, corrects our errors, offends our sensibilities, or crosses our wills may not be a word from the God of the Bible...
- ...it may just be words of our own making and imagination that we want to believe anyway.
- Beware of false prophets (Matt. 7:15).

GOD EXPECTS OBEDIENCE IN RESPONSE TO HIS REVELATIONS OF TRUTH.

- God revealed Himself and spoke to Samuel, so Samuel obeyed God and spoke what God gave Him to say, which resulted in God speaking to Samuel continually (vs. 19-21).
- What does obedience look like in your life to what God has already spoken to you?
- Life can be filled with confusing, frustrating, disorienting, heartbreaking, and difficult seasons where we sometimes don't know what to do, what to say, where to go, or where to even begin.
- You and I need divine guidance from the Lord every single day of our lives.
- God is still speaking. Are you still listening?