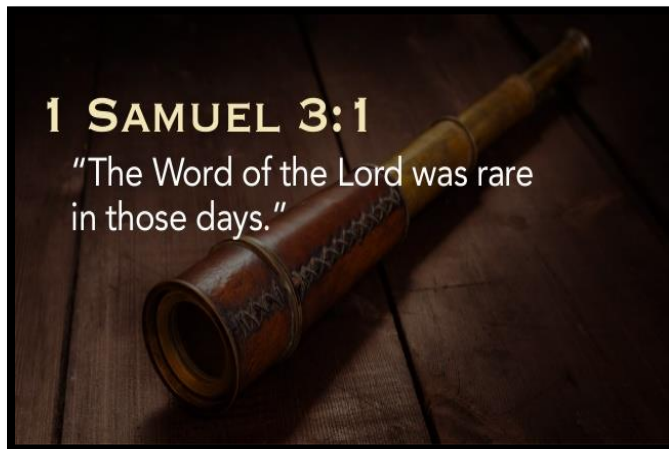


## I am Listening

### 1 Samuel 3:1-21

Online Sermon: [http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page\\_id=3567](http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page_id=3567)

1 Samuel 3 tells us a story of a young boy's first time he heard from God. Upon being weaned at age 5,<sup>1</sup> Samuel's mother dropped him off at the temple to fulfill her promise to "give him over to the Lord for all the days of his life" (1:8). This was during the time when Israel was "virtually bankrupt," the days of the judges when everyone did what was right in their own sight (Judges 17:6, 21:25)!<sup>2</sup> Even the high priest Eli's own sons Hophni and Phinehas had a complete disregard for the Lord (2:12) as demonstrated in their coveting and eating portions of the sacrifices meant for God (2:17)! Samuel had a bedroom adjacent to that of Eli's so that he might serve the nearly blind high priest during the night.<sup>3</sup> One evening God spoke in the temple but not to Eli, his sons or the other priests but to Samuel who was yet to know and have a relationship with God.<sup>4</sup> After having mistaken the voice for Eli that called out his name three times, the fourth time when he heard his name he replied to God as Eli advised him to: "your servant is listening" (3:9). The Lord told Samuel that the priesthood would soon be removed from Eli's family. When morning came Samuel told Eli about the Lord's coming judgement against he and his family and since it could not be atoned for (1:14) Eli merely accepted it without any mention of sorrow or the desire to confess and change. At the end of this part of the story we are told that Samuel became so close to God that his word as a prophet became synonymous with the very word of God (3:19-4:1)!<sup>5</sup>



#### The Problem: Hearing from God is Rare

One of the most common frustrations of God's people is the lack of "two-way" conversations with their Lord! Since He is our Creator, portion and sustainer (Genesis 1:27; Psalms 73:16; Colossians 1:16), who if they were granted even a short conversation with the rock of our Salvation (Psalms 18:2), would not have their hearts filled

<sup>1</sup> M. J. Evans, "[Samuel](#)," ed. Bill T. Arnold and H. G. M. Williamson, *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 864.

<sup>2</sup> M. J. Evans, "[Samuel](#)," ed. Bill T. Arnold and H. G. M. Williamson, *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 863.

<sup>3</sup> Bill T. Arnold, [1 & 2 Samuel](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 81.

<sup>4</sup> Bill T. Arnold, [1 & 2 Samuel](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 82.

<sup>5</sup> Ronald F. Youngblood, "[1, 2 Samuel](#)," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 591.

with unspeakable joy? We want to hear His voice so that we might know and obey His good and perfect will (Romans 12:2) but often our request for the “gentle whisper” (1 Kings 19:12) of His majestic voice either seems to have been denied or we are simply too sinful (Psalms 66:18) to hear or understand what He is saying (Matthew 13:15)! Surely those who have been grafted into the vine and cry out “Abba, Father” (Romans 8:15, 11:11-31) have been heard, so why all the silence? Since the word of the Lord is as rare today as it was in the days of the judges, silence makes sense considering this “ME generation” also does what is right in their own sight. Does this mean if by the Spirit one outright rejects the ways of this world (1 John 2:15) and draws nearer to God that He would speak to them? Most likely yes but even if God did speak to us “royal priests” (1 Peter 2:9) would we know how to begin a conversation with Him much less be like Moses and talk to Him as one friend talks to another (Exodus 33:11)? The following sermon is going to show that God still speaks today but we as His children need to know how to utilize His footprints of communication to listen and hear His gentle whisper.

### God Still Speaks to Servant Hearts

He who bore our iniquities and sorrows<sup>6</sup> does not hide but speaks clearly “right down into the souls”<sup>7</sup> of those who genuinely seek Him! How long can a relationship last when one



party does not speak to another? We all know how much damage the “silent treatment” does to our spouses or children! God loves us unconditionally as demonstrated at the cross and as our Father He always wants to have a conversation with us His children.<sup>8</sup> Even though we are unworthy God will not throw us on the “world’s dust heap”<sup>9</sup> and forget that we exist but instead when we recognize Him as our Master and cry out “speak Lord so that I may know You still notice and accept this broken, servant’s heart;” He will listen and call us by our

name! But before we can hear the voice of our God, we must first ask Him to tear down our veils<sup>10</sup> of indifference or outright defiance against Him! Like Eli our communication problem is

<sup>6</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, [“Speak, Lord!”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 43 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1897), 342.

<sup>7</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, [“Speak, Lord!”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 43 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1897), 343.

<sup>8</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, [“Speak, Lord!”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 43 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1897), 338.

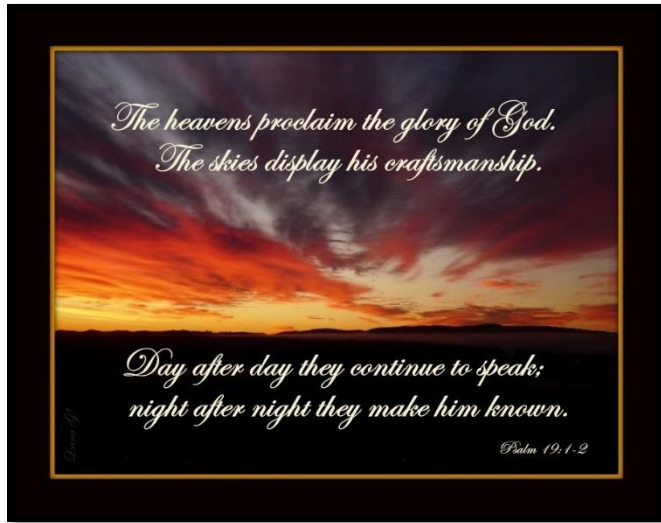
<sup>9</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, [“Speak, Lord!”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 43 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1897), 338–339.

<sup>10</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, [“Speak, Lord!”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 43 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1897), 338.

not physical but spiritual blindness. God tends to speak to those who are willing to hear and obey what He has to say!<sup>11</sup> It was not sinlessness, knowledge or spiritual maturity that were prerequisites for Samuel to hear God's voice but his openness to obey and fulfill any role God had for him. A soul that thirsts for the living God will hear His perfect will for their lives in the footprints of communication He has left, through creation, His word, the Holy Spirit, through other believers and by listening.

## Hearing God Speak Through Creation

One of the most profound footsteps of God's presence and desire to communicate with His children is through creation. Apostle Paul told the church of Rome that all of creation testifies to the eternal power and divine nature of God (Romans 1:20). In his reflections King



David said that though they have no speech and use no words the heavens never stop declaring the glory of the Lord (Psalms 19:1-4)! The complexity and interdependence of all of creation is a constant footprint of God's existence that once reflected upon can still the heart and humble the soul so that one might be ready to hear His gentle whisper. Is it not by looking at this vast universe that in our smallness we come to truly realize the magnitude of His grace to have fearfully and wonderfully made us in His image (Psalms 139:14)? Even though we do not hear audible words from God through

creation,<sup>12</sup> in faith is it not by the still waters (Psalms 23:2), looking at the starry sky, gazing upon beauty of a flower, imagining the vast but mostly unexplored seas, that God seems to speak amidst the solemn silence?<sup>13</sup> I am not suggesting we are to worship creation but rather that we see it as evidence of God's existence, omnipresence and continual desire to have a relationship with His children through He who offers living waters and the bread of life to all those who believe in Him!

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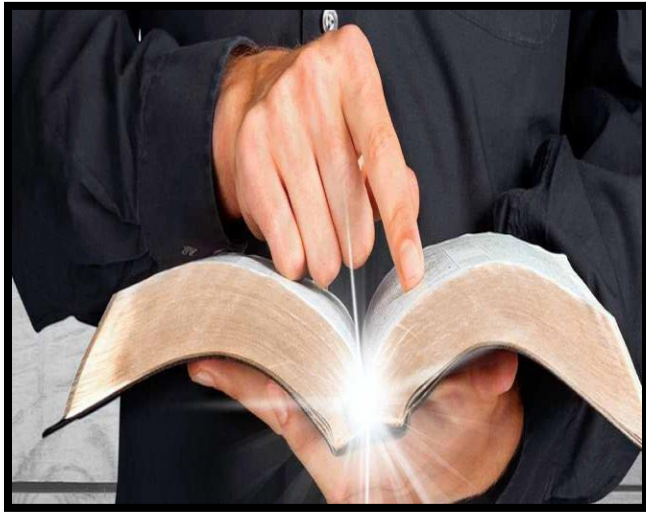
<sup>11</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, "[Speak, Lord!](#)," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 43 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1897), 344.

<sup>12</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, "[Speak, Lord!](#)," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 43 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1897), 342.

<sup>13</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, "[Speak, Lord!](#)," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 43 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1897), 342.

## Hearing God Speak Through His Word

Another footprint that we hear God's voice is through reading His word. When the Devil tempted Jesus to turn stones into bread He responded by stating that a person "shall not live by bread alone, but on every word that comes out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4)! To resist



the desire to hold diversified and often conflicting beliefs so that one might befriend our diversified culture and in turn drive a wedge between us and God,<sup>14</sup> one is to read and see God's love letter as a lamp illuminating the path to establish and maintain a relationship with a holy God (Psalms 119:105). In his letter to Timothy Apostle Paul stated that "all scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). God's speaks through His word which "penetrates even to dividing the soul and spirit, joins and marrow." His

word "judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12) not only so that we will not cherish sin in our hearts (Psalms 66:18) but also so that we might know and obey His good and pleasing will (Romans 12:1-2). It always amazes me how I can quietly read my Bible and suddenly with incredible tenderness and insight the Lord speaks directly into my heart.<sup>15</sup> What is even more amazing is when He asks me to change I often receive His commands with joy (1 John 5:3) for I know this is how I draw nearer to God so that draw nearer to me (James 4:8)!



## Hearing God Speak Through His Spirit

Another direct footprint that we hear God's voice is through His Spirit. Before Jesus ascended into heaven, He told the disciples that once He departed the Spirit of God would come and reside inside believers (John 16:7). The Father sent the Spirit in the name of Jesus to be our Comforter, to aid and guide each person, to give spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4), to bear testimony of

<sup>14</sup> David F. Wells. *The Courage to Be Protestant: Truth-Lovers, Marketers, and Emmergents in the Postmodern World*. Grand Rapids, MI: Willian B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008, page 4.

<sup>15</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, "[Speak, Lord!](#)," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 43 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1897), 343.

the truth (John 14:17) and intercede on our behalf in presenting our prayers to the Father (Romans 8:26-27). Those who are sealed by the Spirit will live eternally with the Father (John 6:27). He convicts us of sin (John 16:8-9) but in turn gives us the power to live righteous lives filled with love, joy peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:16-25). The voice of God can often be heard through the Spirit who communes both with our spirit and God (1 Corinthians 2:10-13). It is through the Holy Spirit that we know we are children of God (Romans 8:16). Praise be there is no longer a veil between us and God but direct access to Him through the Spirit! He illuminates God's word for He is the one who inspired every "jot and tittle" written (2 Peter 1:20; Matthew 5:17-18).<sup>16</sup> How many times have you read the word of God and the Spirit leapt for joy confirming the truth concerning God in unimaginable ways?

### Hearing God Speak Through Other Believers

The next footprint that I want to look at whereby God's voice can be heard is through other believers. Young Samuel was God's voice who told Eli of his family's pending judgment.<sup>17</sup> While one might not be called to be a prophet like Samuel, this does not mean that during



intercessory prayer that God won't give you a message for the person that you are praying for, after all the prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective (James 5:16)! to share with others is not to be confused with self-seeking, worldly foolishness but instead comes from heaven and as such is "first of all pure, then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere" (James 3:17). While we are not to keep council with the ungodly (Psalms 1:1), iron sharpens iron (Proverbs 27:17) when

those within the body of Christ earnestly desire to share truth and build one another up in faith (1 Thessalonians 5:11)! God may use a friend, teacher, parent, or spouse to convey a message of truth into our lives. Also, when we consider others better than ourselves (Philippians 2:3) and do good to them as God instructs us,<sup>18</sup> not only does He talk to them through blessings but also has a conversation with us that begins with "good and faithful servants."

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<sup>16</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, "[Speak, Lord!](#)," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 43 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1897), 343-344.

<sup>17</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, "[Speak, Lord!](#)," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 43 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1897), 338.

<sup>18</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, "[Speak, Lord!](#)," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 43 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1897), 344.

## Hearing God Speak Means one has to Listen!

The final footprint that I want to look at whereby God's voice can be heard is by listening. Let me tell you a story of John (not real name).

I met John several years ago and I have tried my best to establish a friendship with him. He seems to be a man who is deeply in love with God, with a pleasant disposition. I never hear him swear, say bad things about others or talk about obtaining worldly treasures! You would think it would be easy and a pleasure to establish a friendship with such a person and yet many years later I have not been able to do so! The issue is that every time I try to talk to him, he talks so much that I literally do not get an opportunity to say a single word. How I pray that he might someday learn how to take an occasional deep breath and practice listening so that the conversation might be two way and a friendship might be established!



Too often we go to God with a long list of things we covet in our lives in hope that God will respond like a genie in a bottle and grant our every wish. God is not our genie but our Creator and as such only offers what will be good and draw us nearer to Him (Romans 8:28). The relationship between God and us is not established based on finding commonality but based on us submitting to His authority to rule in our lives. So, if we want to hear the voice of God then we must become like Samuel and with

“solemn silence of the mind”<sup>19</sup> and total submission of the heart say, “here I am your servant, speak Lord I am listening!”

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<sup>19</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, [“Speak, Lord!”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 43 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1897), 345.