

“WHEN GOD SPEAKS – SAMUEL”

1 Sam. 1:1-10

CWBC – 3/3/19

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INTRO (10 mins) –

Jab 1 – How many cellphones do you think there are in the USA? According to recent statistics, there are approximately 266 million cellphones in the US. That’s an increase of over 200 million cellphones since 2010. We are a connected bunch of people! We’ve gone from bag phones, to flip phones & Razors, to Nokias & Motorolas, to Blackberries & Jitterbugs. Now, almost everyone has an iPhone or an Adroid (although there are still some flip phone holdouts out there!). But no matter what kind of cellphone we have, we can’t stand it when we can’t make a good connection!

Jab 2 – Remember the TV commercial for a cellular phone company – guy walking around w/ his cell phone asking, “Can you hear me now?” Testing the power of the cell signal & the receptivity of the phone.

Hate calls breaking up & getting dropped. Hate looking down at our phones & seeing 1 bar of

service. We want that signal strength to be strong wherever we are.

Jab 3 – But let me ask you something: How’s your spiritual signal strength when it come to hear from God? Would you say that you have an open line of communication w/ God, or are there some dead spots in your life? How many bars of spiritual signal strength do you have? 2? 3? 4? None? If God was trying to contact you, would He be able to say, “Can you hear me now? Good!”?

God will speak. He is speaking. J.I. Packer in his book, *Knowing God*, said this: “**God has a plan for each of His children. But can God communicate His plan to us? Indeed He can. As man is a communicative [being], so God is a communicative God.**” (p. 210).

Right hook – Open your Bibles or your Bible app to 1 Samuel 1 (page **227** in pew Bible). We are continuing in this series of messages entitled, “When God Speaks” – looking at different OT people & some strategic times when God spoke to them. Today, we are looking at Samuel.

EXPLANATION (10 mins) – This passage of Scripture tells how the Lord called Samuel to be a prophet – a spokesman for Him. As a true prophet

of God, Samuel must speak the words of God & never hide them. And Samuel is the first great prophet to come on the scene in the OT. Abraham was called a prophet in Gen. 20, & Aaron is also referred to as a prophet. But, in the truest sense of the word, if you want to find someone who looks like a prophet & sounds like a prophet, you have to go to Samuel. He is, above everything else, a prophet. And as a prophet, he received God's word, he spoke God's word, & he spoke it just the way God had given it to him. And that's the main function of a prophet. He is a mouthpiece of God.

Some of the characteristics of the OT prophets:

- Called by God
- Had to accurately deliver God's message
- Sometimes had unique traits
 - o Appearance
 - o Jeremiah could not marry
 - o Hosea was instructed to marry a prostitute
 - o Usually led a hard life

APPLICATION (10 mins) – Just as God used Samuel to deliver His message to His people, He still uses others to deliver His message to us today. Sometimes it is through those of us who are preachers; sometimes through family

members – parents to their kids, or other family relationships; sometimes through friends; & sometimes even through total strangers.

Question: When God calls to us, are we listening? Back to earlier illustration, how's our signal strength? Even here today in this place, are you at full power w/ all your bars, ready to hear from God & respond to Him?

When God's quiet – v. 1 – But first, we need to know that there are times when God is quiet, when His voice is "rare." And even in these times, He is still speaking. He uses the silence to get our attention.

Have you been through a time when God was silent? Andrew Peterson wrote a song called, "The Silence of God":

It's enough to drive a man crazy, it'll break a man's faith
It's enough to make him wonder, if he's ever been sane
When he's bleating for comfort from Thy staff and Thy rod
And the Heaven's only answer is the silence of God

Maybe you're in one of those times right now.

- Unexplained suffering
- Unexplained loss
- Unexplained emptiness

- Unexplained confusion

Nancy Guthrie: “Our task isn’t to decipher exactly how all of life’s pieces fit and what they all mean, but to remain faithful and obedient to the God who knows all mysteries. This is the kind of faith that’s pleasing to God—a faith that’s determined to trust him when he hasn’t answered all the questions, when we haven’t heard any voice from the whirlwind.” (<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/when-god-is-silent/>)

If you live long enough, you will go through times in your spiritual walk when God seems distant, His voice is hard to hear, His leading is hard to discern. Don’t have all the answers as to why that happens. Sometimes the reasons are obvious – maybe we are neck deep in sin & unwilling to repent – God’s silence can be part of His heavy hand of discipline on us. Don’t expect to hear from God when your spiritual ears are clogged w/ the wax of sin!

But then sometimes it’s the beauty of spiritual deprivation that is a part of God’s plan for us. He deprives us of His obvious working in our lives to cultivate a deeper hunger for Him. The old adage, “Absence makes the heart grow fonder” can apply to our spiritual lives, too.

- When does a cold drink of water taste the best? When you’ve been deprived of that water & you’re parched w/ thirst.
- When do you truly appreciate the comforts of home? When you’ve been deprived of those comforts & have been away for a long time in an unfamiliar place.

If you find yourself in a period where God’s voice is quiet, do these things:

- Stay faithful to what you know you need to do
- Confront any known sin in your life
- Talk to someone who is more mature in their faith
- Get ready to receive

When God’s call comes – God did begin to speak again, calling to Samuel 3 times. And He will begin to speak to you again, too. Like Samuel, we need to be in the position & the place where God has promised to speak.

v. 3 – Samuel was in the place where he KNEW God would speak. He didn’t completely understand what was going on, but he knew enough to know where he needed to be to hear from God.

What about you & me? Instead of running away from God, we need to be running to God & positioning ourselves to be able to hear from Him.

Where do we know He is going to speak?

- In church as we worship w/ God's people, study His Word, fellowshiping, serving & sharing
- In His Word
- In Prayer
- In circumstances of our lives – CPR at 4:00 AM – lost the man – When I got back to my truck & opened the door, Kari Jobe was singing

We are the light of the world

We are the city on the hill

We are the light of the world

We gotta, we gotta

We gotta let the light shine

And not only do we need to do like Samuel & position ourselves to hear from God, we need to respond like Samuel & open our ears to hear what God has to say to us – v. 10

When God's message is hard – v. 11-14 – One of the difficult parts of a prophet's job was to deliver a hard message to God's people. Sometimes the response to the message would be

negative, harsh, even dangerous to the prophet. But, the prophet had to be obedient to God's instructions.

As a pastor, it's not easy to deliver the hard messages of God's truth sometimes. People who are in rebellion against God & are in defiance of His commands & in denial of their sinfulness do not want to hear God's truth spoken into their lives. That's why many preachers these days deliver watered-down messages that are designed to just make people feel good about themselves, no matter how they're living their lives.

CONCLUSION – There's an old hymn we used to sing that had these words:

Verse 1

Speak to my heart Lord Jesus
Speak that my soul may hear
Speak to my heart Lord Jesus
Calm every doubt and fear

Chorus 1

Speak to my heart
Oh speak to my heart
Speak to my heart I pray
Yielded and still seeking Thy will
Oh speak to my heart today

Verse 2

Speak to my heart Lord Jesus
Purge me from every sin
Speak to my heart Lord Jesus
Help me the lost to win

Verse 3

Speak to my heart Lord Jesus
It is no longer mine
Speak to my heart Lord Jesus
I would be wholly Thine