

Paradise Lost and Restored: Hearing God's Voice (Part 1)

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I. Introduction

Do you ever stop to listen to the voices in your head? Where do the following thoughts come from, "You're way prettier than she is," "Don't worry about it, no one will ever know," "Your life will always suck," "I'm so ugly and goofy, no one's ever gonna like me."? Is that us talking or someone else? How can we tell?

II. Is it Possible to Hear God's Voice Today? If it is, How Can We Tell it's Him?

The Bible is without error, so what does it say about hearing God's voice? From beginning to end, the Bible reveals that we have a God who speaks. If man hasn't been created yet, why does God speak in the first 24 verses of Genesis 1? Why does the word "said" appear 11 times and the word "called" appear 5 times in relation to God in Genesis 1-2? Everything about Genesis 1-2 is designed to tell us that God is a God who speaks. Look throughout the Bible and you find God talking. From the first to the last chapter of the Bible God is talking. If God is unchanging, Hebrews 13:8, should it surprise us that we can hear His voice today, in fact, shouldn't we expect it?

How does God speak? First, God never speaks contrary to His Word. If anyone tells you something that contradicts what God said in the Bible, realize that this is not God speaking. Second, Scripture reveals that God speaks in many different ways, not all of which may be heard today: through an audible voice, Genesis 12:1-4. Through the Bible, 2 Timothy 3:16. Through Jesus, John 10:27; Hebrews 1:2. Through thoughts, Proverbs 21:1; Hebrews 4:12. Through others, Acts 9:10-17. Through events/circumstances, Jonah 1. Through visions, Acts 18:9-10. Through Angels, Matthew 28:5-7. Through dreams, Genesis 20:3. Through creation, Romans 1:19-20.

Hearing God's voice, the two dangers, there are two extremes we must avoid: hearing God all the time and not hearing Him at all. Some people hear God's voice in everything. They'll tell you that God spoke to them about your life, "You should take this job and not that one," "marry this guy, not that one," "work on your pride," or "God has BIG plans for your future." But when you look at the details of what they said, it sounds like a psychic you see on TV or it's too general. Then there's the other extreme. These people believe that God ONLY speaks through the Bible, nothing else. They point to Scripture and say, "You can't trust your heart. After all, 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, Jeremiah 17:9.'" Yes, it's true that our wickedness resides in our hearts, Mark 7:21-23. But to say that the only thing that can come out of a Christian's heart is wickedness is to nullify God's power to redeem and the Spirit's (who resides in us) power to overcome our sinful hearts, Romans 8:9-13. Thus, what we hear may come from God's Spirit rather than our sinful heart. In fact, shouldn't we expect to hear from God when we walk by means of His Spirit?

How can we discern God's voice from the other voices we hear? God did not leave us to guess as to whether it's His voice or not. In 1 John 4:1-3, God Himself tells us that not every voice we hear will be His. Therefore, He gives us a test to verify whether or not it's His voice: the individuals who verify Jesus' identity are from God, the others are not. So the question is, "Does what was spoken line up with who Jesus is and what He said?" God makes the same point in 1 Corinthians 12:3—the things God's Spirit says line up with who Jesus is, everything else is not from Him.

How many voices do we hear? Satan's, he's constantly at work trying to deceive us so that he can rob, kill and destroy us, Genesis 3; John 10:10; 2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 Peter 5:8. The World's, the world has an opinion about every aspect of human life, sex, politics, food, romance, etc. And everything the world and those who live by the world say is influenced by Satan, 1 John 5:19; Ephesians 2:2. Our Flesh's, our flesh hates anything related to God and loves anything related to evil, 1 Samuel 18:8-9. God's, He constantly speaks to mankind. The problem is that we often don't recognize His voice. Why? Because we don't know who He is nor have we bothered to ask.

In order to hear God's voice, we have to know it, when Samuel first heard God's voice, he had no idea that it was God speaking, 1 Samuel 3:1-9. In order to hear His voice we have to know what it sounds like. And in order to know what it sounds like, we have to know Him, what He's like, how He thinks, how He speaks, etc.

When God speaks through His Word, the Bible, what do you hear? When you read the Bible or hear it preached what do you hear? Do you hear theological doctrines, a boring sermon, or God's voice? When you read Genesis 3 do you hear Anthropology (the doctrine of mankind) or Hamartiology (the doctrine of sin) or do you hear the betrayal of a Father by His children and His willingness to die for them in order to save them? When you read John 4 what do you hear? The doctrine of salvation or God rescuing a woman from a desperate search for happiness?

What Who stops us from hearing God's voice? Satan is behind every other voice we hear besides God's. His goal is to twist and drown out God's voice so that he can blind you and rob you of your God-given identity. If he can get you to believe his lies, he's got you. Satan tries to drown out God's voice and steal Jesus' identity: Matthew 4.

Applying what we've learned, it's clear that God speaks. But it's also clear that there are other voices and Satan is behind each one of them. If you want to discern between them, you have to learn to recognize God's voice and what He says about you. When you find yourself defining your life or circumstances by the voices you hear, ask yourself this, "Who said that to me, God or Satan?"

III. Conclusion

The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.