

Have You Heard From God?

PS 81:8-14

Intro: On Sunday nights we always have a time of testimony. A time when I ask the question, *"What has God been doing in your life this last week?"* More often than not there are only a handful that raises their hand to share; Why do you suppose that is? Is it that God isn't working in the rest of our lives? Is that the God only speaks to and interacts with just a few of us and ignores the rest?

Well of course not. The problem is that many of us really don't know when God is acting, because we have not been taught how to hear God's voice. Oh, we know God but His voice is too hard to hear in our world that is full of so many voices trying to get our attention. Mom, can you help me? Dad can I use the car tonight? There is TV, radio, internet, cell phones, PDAs, IPOD. Of course the boss is always trying to get our attention, the list could go on. The question we are going to look at today, as we begin a 3 part series on *How to Listen to God's Voice*, is ***Have You Heard From God?***

[Read PS 81:8-14/pray/dismiss Jr Church]

Psalms 81 is a sad saga of a people who would not listen to God. The compassionate heart of the Father in His numerous attempts to gain Israel's attention and devotion and their persistent rejection are revealed in our text today, verses 8-14.

When you read them you can feel the heartbeat of God as He pleads for the nation of Israel, saying, *"Please listen to me. Please hear My voice."* Each of us, too, should ask, *"Lord, have You been trying to tell me something that I desperately need to hear? Are You exhorting me to listen to Your Voice?"* I wonder

how many times God has spoken to us and we were not listening. I wonder how many times He had something specific we needed to hear, but we were too occupied to pay attention.

I believe that one of the most valuable lessons we can ever learn is how to listen to God. In the midst of our complex and hectic lives, among the cell phones, iPods, and computers, nothing is more urgent, nothing is more necessary, nothing more rewarding than hearing what God has to say. The Bible is explicit, God speaks to us just as powerfully today as in the days in which the Bible was written. His Voice waits to be heard, and having heard it, we are launched into the greatest, most exciting adventure we could ever imagine.

Notice I said that the Bible is explicit, God speaks to us just as powerfully today as in the days in which the Bible was written. But you may be asking...

I. ***Why is God Still Speaking Today?***

- A. Why God speaks to us
- B. Some might ask "Why would God still want to talk to us today? Hasn't He said enough from Genesis to Revelation?"
- C. There are several reasons why God would want to talk to us today:
 - 1. He loves us and desires to fellowship with us
 - a. If there is no communication between us then our relationship is only one way
 - b. Dialogue is necessary for a healthy relationship
 - c. That dialogue between us and Jesus is what true fellowship is all about

- d. Fellowship is nil, zero nothing when one person does all the talking and the other does all the listening
 - e. God still speaks today because He wants to develop a intimate, person, love relationship that involves a two-party conversation
2. As His children we need His counsel for effective decision making – Joshua, Moses, Jacob, Noah
- a. He wants us to make right choices
 - b. Therefore, He is still responsible for providing accurate information, and that comes through His speaking to us
3. He knows there will come a time when our backs will be against the wall and we will need his comfort
- a. We all have Red Sea experiences, when our backs are to the wall and we do not know which way to turn
 - b. We undergo failures just as Joshua and the children of Israel did at Ai.
 - c. When we undergo defeats, God knows our need for His assurance and confidence
4. Most importantly, He wants us to know Him
- a. If God were to stop speaking it is doubtful any of us would ever discover what He is really like
 - b. If our number one priority is to know God, then there must be more than just a one-way line of communication
 - c. There must be a link in which He talks to us and we listen or we talk and He listens
5. So, **God Is Still Speaking Today**
- II. If God is still speaking then **How Does God speak:**
1. **The answer is actually very simple**
- a. **In the OT & NT He did it**

1) By direct revelation

- a) By His Spirit He spoke to the Spirit of men like Abraham, who one day heard God directly tell him to leave the land he was living in and got into a land God would show him
- b) **“Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will show thee: ²And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing”** (Gen 12:1-2)

2) And By Dreams & Visions

- a) The best example of this is Danel
- b) God revealed His world destiny in a series of dreams
- c) He saw the empires that were to come
- d) Through these dreams God gave Daniel great insight into future world events, some of which are unfolding today
- e) I do want to caution you in this area however, the Bible does not say we are seek the mind of God in dreams or visions
- f) When He desires He can and still does use dreams and visions but it is at His will not ours

b. Through **Angels**

- 1) God spoke to Mary through an Angel to tell here that she was going to have a Son
- 2) He announced the Birth of Jesus to the shepherds by an angel

- c. And through **His prophets**
 - 1) The prophets of old exclaimed, "**Thus saith the Lord...**"
 - 2) With this the people listened and obeyed because they knew it came directly for God
- d. Today God doesn't use:
 - 1) **Direct Revelation**
 - 2) **He doesn't use Dreams & Visions**
 - 3) **Nor Angels**
 - 4) **He doesn't need to use these because He has His completed Word**
- e. Today God has:
 - 1) Given "**...some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;** ¹²**For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ**" to speak to His people
 - 2) In the OT the Prophet cried, "**Thus saith the Lord...**" today the preacher says, "**The Bible Says...**"
 - 3) When a preacher, evangelist, or teacher is teaching and preaching from God's Written Word you can know it is a message for you from God
- f. In biblical days God used **His written Word** and He is still using it to talk to us
 - 1) He gave Moses the 10 Commandments and use the Law to communicate to His people
 - 2) God did speak audibly in biblical days – Moses and the burning bush; Saul on the road to Damascus

- 3) Today we have a record of His Words to guide us so He doesn't need to communicate audibly
- g. In biblical days God used **Circumstances** to speak:
 - 1) Take Gideon for example
 - 2) God wanted Gideon to lead the nation of Israel into battle
 - 3) Being fearful, Gideon decided to lay out a fleece; in fact he laid out two
 - 4) God graciously reached down to Gideon and gave him the assurance and confidence he needed
 - 5) Another word of caution – Gideon didn't want to do what God asked him to do so he (Gideon) used the flees to try and get out of doing what God wanted
 - 6) When we try to use a flees today it is normally for the same reason – to get our of doing what God has already told us to do
 - 7) God still uses **Circumstances** but at his choosing and according to His will not at our flees
- h. Finally He speaks to people through **The Holy Spirit**
 - 1) In Acts 16:6-7 Paul was on his way to Asia, when God spoke to him "**...and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia**"
 - 2) Then he went to Mysia and the Bible says that they, "**...assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not**"

- 3) One of the most common ways God spoke in the NT was through the Holy Spirit

III. **God's Goal When He Does Speak**

- A. Unlike us, God doesn't carry on trivial small talk; When God speaks it has a purpose; a goal.
- B. What is God's Goal?
1. So we can **Comprehend** the truth: 3 areas He wants us to comprehend:
 - a. He wants us to know the truth about Him/Jesus/Holy Spirit
 - b. He wants us to know the truth about ourselves – David said in PS 139:23-24, **“Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting”**
 - c. He wants us to know the truth about other people
 2. So we can be **Conformed** to the truth
 - a. Rom 8:29
 - b. John 14:6
 - c. James 1:23-24
 - d. James 1:5
 - e. 1 Tim 4:12
 - f. 2 Tim 3:14-15
 3. So we might communicate His truth
 - a. Matt 28:19-20
 - b. Act 1:8
 - c. 2 Tim 2:2
 - d. 2 Cor 5:20
 - e. Gal 2:13
- C. So, **we know that God still speaks today, we how He speaks and that He has a reason for speaking but...**

IV. **How Does God Gets Our Attention**

1. **A Restless Spirit**

2. In Esther God used a restless spirit to get the king to decide to honor Mordecai, listen to 6:1-3, **“On that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king. ²And it was found written, that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's chamberlains, the keepers of the door, who sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus. ³And the king said, What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, There is nothing done for him”**
 3. God used a restless spirit to speak to the King
- B. **A word from others –**
1. In 2 Sam 12:1 God had Nathan come to David and tell him about a rich man who had many lambs but, when a visitor came how the rich man went to a poor man and took is only lamb. When David heard the story the Bible says that David's, **“...anger was greatly kindled against the man...the man that hath done this thing shall surely die”** Then, Nathan said to David, **“...Thou art the man”**
- C. **Blessings**
1. Paul illustrated this in Romans 2:4 when he wrote: **“...despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?”**
 2. **ILL:** If you knew your son was hanging around with a group of boys who were run-ins with the law, wouldn't you sit down and warn him of the dangers involved? Wouldn't you urge him to make sure his friends had a positive influence on his life? Wouldn't you convey to him the truth, **“bad company corrupts good**

morals?" Of course you would.

You would go to great lengths to establish proper bearings for your son to steer his life by, and God does no less for us.

D. Unanswered prayer

1. As long as our prayers are answered we can cruise along, enjoying God's blessings and provision
 - a. God's Word tells us there are reasons for unanswered prayer:
 - b. Asking for the wrong reason, Jam 4:3, **"Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts"**
2. Disobedience, 1 Jn 3:22, **"And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight"**
3. Asking outside of the will of God, 1 Jn 5:14, **"...if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us"**
4. Unanswered prayer, according 1 Pet 3:7, can be the result of insensitivity in a marriage, **"Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered"**

E. Disappointment –

F. Finally, He uses Personal Failures & weaknesses

1. Tragedy –
 - a. The Bible is full of examples of how God used a tragedy to get the attention of His people
 - b. We can't always view tragedy in a person's life as a sign of God's disapproval, but we should look at every tragic situation through a spiritual lens.

2. Sickness & Affliction –

- a. Hezekiah was a godly king
- b. The Lord had blessed him on many occasions and had delivered him by striking down 185,000 Assyrians 2 Chron 32
- c. But God used a sickness to call attention to his pride, **"...sick to the death, and prayed unto the LORD: and he spake unto him, and he gave him a sign. ²⁵But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem"**(2 Chron 32:24-25
- d. God got Hezekiah's attention through his sickness
- e. I have known many a preacher who, at the top of their ministry became deathly ill. Once they recover they will tell you that it was because they began to see the ministry as theirs not God's and had begun to take credit for it themselves.
- f. **Conclusion:** Does God still speak today? You better believe He does. He wants to be in a love relationship with us. All too often however, He has to go to great extremes to get our attention. What is God saying to you today? Do you hear Him today? Jesus said, **"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me"** (Jn 10:27). If you are hear today and you know His voice is He speaking to you? Is He not telling you to call to him and cry out as David cried, **"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting"**