

1 Samuel 3:2-10 Tuning in God's Voice

One of the truly beautiful stories of the Bible is the colorful story of God's call to the young lad **Samuel**, calling young Samuel into a life of service. The story is found in Old Testament book of **1 Samuel chapter 3**. I am going to read a portion of the story beginning with verse 2-10.

And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, & his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see; And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was, & Samuel was laid down to sleep; That the Lord called Samuel: & he answered, Here am I. And he ran unto Eli, & said, Here am I; for thou callest me. & he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went & lay down. And the Lord called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose & went to Eli, & said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again. Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed unto him. And the Lord called Samuel again the third time. And he arose & went to Eli, & said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child. Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: & it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went & lay down in his place. And the Lord came, & stood, & called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth. ("Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." NIV)

In the **quietness of the night** young Samuel heard a Voice! Samuel thought it was the voice of Eli, but the voice in the night was the voice of God calling Samuel to a new & glorious life! When he realized it was God speaking to him, Samuel responded beautifully by saying: "**Here am I, Lord, speak, I'm listening.**" Samuel found a new & exiting life, because he listened & he willingly obeyed the Voice of God for his life. I believe God wants to speak to **your** heart even this morning! How are **you** going to respond to the Divine Voice which speaks to you today? Are you listening for His Voice?

It seems in our day that for every **one** soul that exclaims, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth" there are **ten** that say, "Hear, Lord! For thy servant speaketh." We seem far more concerned that God hears us, than that we hear God! If prayer is our response to God's presence, then first we must **tune in** to that presence. We have such a sad way of tuning God **out** of our lives. We come home & the first thing we do is switch on the television. We have CNN going when we eat our lunch, & the radio playing when we drive the car. We are always reading a newspaper, magazine, computer manual, Internet blog, facebook, **something**, anything, to fill up spaces. Jesus said: "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (Matt. 11:15).

Any parent knows about ears that do not hear! While being called away from my playing, I remember saying in response to my mother's raised voice, "Honest, I didn't hear you until the third time." **Don't look so pious**, you've done the same thing! And so we often fail to "hear" God's call to us.

Listening is an art & we must learn to listen to God! God often speaks quietly! So let's tune in to His Voice! There are many voices that call out to you & I today! Some voices call out in the night when all is quiet & still. Some voices are calling out to us this very moment. How we respond to these voices is totally up to us! Listen to the voices that beckon to you today. These Voices are beckoning you to the new & glorious Christian life! There are at least three important voices we ought to consider: --

1. The Voice of Conscience!

Conscience is that voice from within us that speaks of right & wrong. **It reminds us of our sinful, or wrongful acts!** The IRS received a letter from a conscience-stricken taxpayer, which read: "Dear Sir: My conscience has been bothering me. Here is \$175, which I owe in back taxes." There was a P.S. at the bottom that read: "If my conscience continues to bother me, I'll send in the rest."

Do you remember the story of the **woman** brought before Jesus who had been **caught in the very act of adultery**? Her **accusers**, with **stones in their hands**, asked Jesus what they should do in the light of **Old Testament law**, that said “such a person should **be stoned**.” Jesus simply bent down, & with His finger, wrote on the ground, without saying a word. When the accusers pressed Him for an answer, Jesus replied: “**If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her**” (John 8:7 NIV). At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. That which convicted & reprimanded the accusers was **not** the pathetic condition of the woman. It was not even the words of Christ! Rather, it was their **own conscience that brought conviction to their hearts**.

My friends, apart from what the Bible says, & apart from what the preacher may preach, **there is one voice you cannot escape!** That is the voice of your own **conscience**. **A guilty conscience is a very haunting voice that speaks from within you!** How does **your** conscience speak to you this morning? Is your conscience full of guilt & shame? You may attempt to **hid** from God as Adam & Eve did. You may attempt to **run** from God as Jonah did. **But you can never hid nor run from your conscience!** Every where you go, you take your conscience with you! Your conscience is like the “**hound of heaven**” in that it follows you night & day.

A few years ago I read in the newspaper about a woman in upstate New York whose secret stayed buried for 37 years. Finally, when she began hearing voices from a corner of her back yard, she called the police, & convinced a skeptical detective with 44 years of experience on the job that there indeed was a baby buried there.

The woman, now 68 years old, had killed her baby & buried it between the garage & the back-alley fence shortly after giving birth to the illegitimate child 37 years earlier. The woman had been under psychiatric care for many years! The policeman said she was pleading for help! Police unearthed a metal box containing the remains of a small baby. The presence of that little body, just 40 feet from her back door, had preyed on the woman’s mind for 37 years!

Through those 37 years she had never told anyone about the birth, the smothering of the new born, & the placing of the body in a fishing tackle box. The baby was the result of an extra-marital affair with a man who had died eight years before she revealed her secret. She had even kept her pregnancy from her husband by wearing baggy clothing; he was completely ignorant of what had happened. **The woman confessed because of what she faced every day by just looking out her kitchen window!**

Your sin may not be as great as her sin, but let me ask you: What may you be attempting to hid in your life? What do you have buried in the back yard of your life? **The only escape from a guilty conscience is the forgiving & cleansing grace of a loving God!**

2. The Voice of Influence!

Everyone of us here today has been influenced by somebody! **Influence is a powerful force!** What kind of influence do **you** exert **on others**? The voice of influence comes to us from those who have crossed our pathway in life! There are people that have influenced **me** who have long since gone on to their eternal reward -- but their **voice of influence** still lives. There have been Sunday School teachers who taught me as a child. There was my 5th grade school teacher, Mrs. Ruggles, who always had her Bible laying out on her classroom desk. There are preachers who have laid their hands on my shoulder, & said: “My son, be true to God!” My own dear godly mother had such a powerful influence on my life!

God is doing all there is in His power to bear influence on you through others in order to help bring you to Himself. Stop & think for a moment, think about those who are having, or who have had, a very good, & positive, & Christian influence on your life! A godly teacher, a godly pastor, a godly wife/husband, a godly parent! Maybe it is a child’s sincerity, a word spoken, a song sung, a life lived! Through their **silent voice of influence**

they speak to your heart's need.

A few years ago I heard the Finley Family Singers, a mother, dad & three teenage children, two girls & one son. At the time I heard them they had been singing gospel songs together for about ten years. I learned that the boy (who was then in his early 20's), had gone to a Sunday School as a lad; he got saved at age five; came home from church & began to live the Christian life before his parents. The parents had never been to church, & did not care to go; they loved to party & drink! **But their son's steady influence eventually won mom & dad & sisters**, until they too all came to know the Lord! And now the family travels singing in Gospel Concerts! Oh, the influence of one faithful boy!

The name John Wanamaker may not mean anything to you, but he was a Sam Walton before his time. John Wanamaker developed one of the first large department stores in the 1800s in Philadelphia, PA. By the way, he also served as Postmaster General under President Benjamin Harrison, & the two of them came through Benson together on the So. Pacific RR, making a stop here, & John Wanamaker was invited by the President to give a speech. (Just a little local history lesson).

But anyway, John Wanamaker, of mercantile fame in the late 1800's, tells of a dear saint in the church he attended when he was but a lad, & of the influence she had on him. He even recalled the purple shawl she was accustomed to wearing. Long after she was in heaven, when ever he was in the process of a business deal, tempted to drive a sharp bargain, suddenly he would remember that little saint in her purple shawl, looking at him from heaven & saying: "**Johnny, I know you will be honest. I'm depending on you.**" Wanamaker could **never be dishonest** in business because of the powerful influence of this glorified saint.

For many of you, the voice of influence lives within you even today, calling you to a life of godliness!

3. The Voice of Christ!

More loudly, more authoritatively, & more persuasively, then the **voice of conscience**, or the **voice of influence**, is the **Voice of Christ** calling to you today!

That beautiful invitation found in **Revelation 3:20** has always been intriguing to me! Jesus says: "Behold I stand at the door & knock, if any man (any man, woman, boy or girl) **hears my voice** & opens the door, I will come into him." The Savior not only knocks, but He also **lifts His voice** in calling us to let Him come into our hearts. He does not call from a distance! **He comes!** He does not come & go! **He stands!** He does not stand & do nothing! **He knocks!** He is not content just to knock! **He calls! He comes, He stands, He knocks, He calls!** As well as the hand that knocks, there is the voice that pleads!

The voice of Christ calling out to us! It may be during times of **sickness**, or **trials & distress**, that the Lord gains our attention, & alerts us to our spiritual need. But, He is always knocking & always calling! Oh, How **Patient** is Jesus in quest for your soul. How **Earnest** is Jesus in quest for your soul. How **Gentle** is Jesus in quest for your soul. How **Gracious** is Jesus in quest for your soul. The Bible says: "The Spirit & the bride say, Come!' And let him who hears say, Come!' Whoever is thirsty, let him come; & whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life" (Revelation 22:17 NIV).

Many years ago King George V & Queen Mary of England, were vacationing by the seaside. They took a long walk along the ocean front when suddenly the Queen sprained her ankle. The couple was forced to find their way to a nearby cottage to seek assistance. In answer to their knock at the door, a voice called out: "**Who's there?**" "King George & Queen Mary," was the reply! "You don't expect me to believe that, do you?" "Come see for yourself," said the king. Opening the door, the man & his wife immediately invited the royal couple into their home, & gave them all the help & hospitality they could! For years, that couple retold the story & always concluded by

saying: **"You know, we almost refused to answer the door!" Oh, how much more tragic it would be to hear the voice of the King of Heaven, & to refuse to let Him come into your heart!**

Peace & joy & blessed fellowship can be yours **eternally**, if you will only heed His Voice & answer the knock of His nail-pieced hand.

Conclusion: -- Each of these voices beckon to you today! The voice of conscience; the voice of influence; the voice of Christ. They call to you to leave the darkness of sin's night. They call to you to enter the Light of God's Salvation. The Bible says: "Today if you will hear His voice (that is the voice of conscience, or influence, or the voice of God's Holy Spirit), **harden not your hearts!**" (Heb. 4:7b). Do not turn a deaf ear. Don't turn Him away. Do not turn the Savior away from your heart! No matter how weary your heart, or wasted your life. No matter how shameful your treatment of Him has been. No matter how sinful & hopeless you may feel. No matter whether you are a Ph.D., or a fifth-grade dropout.

No matter whether you are black or white or brown or yellow; -- **I have good news for you!** Christ wants to come into your emptiness with His fullness. Christ wants to come into your sinfulness with His forgiveness. Christ wants to come into your weariness with His strength. Christ wants to come into your sorrow with His joy. Christ wants to come into your troubled mind with His peace. Christ wants to come into your heart with His power.

When young Samuel understood that it was the voice of God speaking to him, he responded by saying: "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." God did great & mighty things in Samuel's obedient heart & life. **And** God wants to perform His good & perfect will in your life, **if you will obey His voice to you today!**

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August 10, 2014 -- Sunday morning