

Are You Listening? ***1 Sam 3:2-10***

Intro: Good listening is like tuning in a radio station, for good results, you can listen to only one station at a time. Trying to listen to two radio stations at the same time is like me trying to listen to Sally while listening to Rush Limbaugh. I end up with distortion and frustration. Listening requires a choice of where I place my attention. To tune into my partner, I must first choose to put away all that will divide my attention. That might mean laying down the newspaper, moving away from the dishes in the sink, putting down the book I'm reading, setting aside my projects.

Robert W. Herron, Homemade, June, 1987.

How good a listener are you?

- 1) Since you think about four times faster than a person usually talks, do you use this time to think about other things while you're keeping track of the conversation?
- 2) Do you listen primarily for facts rather than ideas when someone is speaking?
- 3) Do you avoid listening to things you feel will be too difficult to understand?
- 4) Can you tell from a person's appearance and delivery that there won't be anything worthwhile said?
- 5) When someone is talking to you do you appear to be paying attention when you're not?
- 6) Do certain words and phrases prejudice you so you cannot listen objectively?
- 7) When listening are you distracted by outside sights and sounds?

Today we are going to look at what it takes to be a good listener to the Voice of God.

[Read 1 Sam 3:4-10\Pray\Dismiss Jr. Church]

The story is told of Franklin Roosevelt, who often endured long receiving lines at the White House. He complained that no one really paid any attention to what was said. One day, during a reception, he decided to try an experiment. To each person who passed down the line and shook his hand, he murmured, "I murdered my grandmother this morning." The guests responded with phrases like, "Marvelous! Keep up the good work. We are proud of you. God bless you, sir." It was not till the end of the line, while greeting the ambassador from Bolivia, that his words were actually heard. Nonplussed, the ambassador leaned over and whispered, "I'm sure she had it coming."

Our greatest need and the thing we all fail miserably at is our listening to God. Oh, we may pray and we will read our Bible and even seek godly council but when it comes right down to it we really don't listen to God's voice. All too often we make our decisions on a best guess scenario because we really don't know how to listen to God's Voice.

In our text for today Samuel gives a good example of the attitude servant of God should have to listen to God's Voice, "...**Speak; for thy servant heareth**" (1 Sam 3:10), what a beautiful way to answer God's voice. Eli taught Samuel how to listen to God, and if we are going to be men and women of God today, we must learn how we can hear what God is saying to us. We do so in a number of ways...

First We Need To Listen...

- I. ***Expectantly*** – III: John Quincy Adams held more important offices than anyone else in the history of the U.S. He served

with distinction as president, senator, congressman, minister to major European powers, and participated in various capacities in the American Revolution, the War of 1812, and events leading to the Civil War. Yet, at age 70, with much of that behind him, he wrote, "My whole life has been a succession of disappointments. I can scarcely recollect a single instance of success in anything that I ever undertook."

Charles Sell, *Unfinished Business*, Multnomah, 1989, p. 233.

- A. Far too many Christians have the same sense when it comes to believing God answers their prayers:
1. They could say that time and time again when I pray I never seem to get an answer
 - a) The problem, however, that they don't take their petition to them expecting an answer
 - b) They fail to realize the full power and reality of the Lord because when they go to Him with their petitions they really don't expect to hear from Him.
 - c) Jesus said in Jn 16:13 **"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come"**
- B. What does it take to listen **Expectantly?** It takes at least 4 things:
1. **We need to listen with Confidence**
 - a) First, we must be confident that when we listen to God, we will hear what we need to hear
 - b) It may not always be what we wish to hear, but God communicates to us what is essential in our walk
 - c) Would any of you withhold information from our children that they need to in order to fulfill any of our requests of them?

- d) Of course not, that would be foolish – asking our child to do something without telling them how.
 - e) Jesus said, **"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"** (Matt 7:11)
 - f) Jesus tells us that we can listen to God with all confidence
2. **We need to listen with understanding of our Dependence**
- a) Second, when we come before God we must come in recognition that we are totally dependent upon the Holy Spirit to teach us truth
 - b) If we come to Him with a prideful attitude, it will make it all but impossible for the Holy Spirit to teach us
 - c) Jesus said, **"Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you."** (Jn 16:7)
 - d) There's no way for us to hear from God apart from the ministry of the Holy Spirit
 - e) When God speaks through others or circumstances, it is the work of the Spirit
 - f) Each of us have a living, divine receiver within us in the person of the Holy Spirit
 - g) Paul said, **"we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God"** (1 Cor 2:12)
 - h) Prayer isn't God up there and us down here; it is the Holy Spirit speaking within us, bearing witness

- to our spirits that we many know the mind of Christ
- i) To receive God's directions we must have a right relationship with Him – that relationship means that we must be filled with His Spirit
 - j) If we are not totally depending on the Holy Spirit we will not be able to hear God's Voice
3. **We need to listen with Care**
- a) Heb 4:12 tells us that, **"...the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart"**
 - b) This means that everything we think we hear needs to be sifted through the Word of God.
 - c) Before we accept anything into our lives, we need to be careful to filter it through Scripture
4. **We need to listen to him openly**
- a) Third, we must come to God openly
 - b) 2 Tim 3:16 is a very familiar passage, Paul wrote, **"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness"**
 - c) To listen openly means to be willing to hear God correct us as well as comfort us, to hear God convict us as well as assure us
 - d) If we are unwilling to hear the correction, before long our need for correction will dramatically increase
 - e) Many of us have gotten on our knees before God and He spoke to us, but He didn't say what we wanted to hear

- f) Even in the correction God has a positive goal in mind.
- C. So, if we are going to listen **Expectantly** we need to do it with confidence, understanding our dependence on the Holy Spirit, careful to filter everything through Scripture and we must be open to correction
- Secondly We Need To Listen...**
- II. **Patiently** - The purposes of God often develop slowly because His grand designs are never hurried. The great New England preacher Phillips Brooks was noted for his poise and quiet manner. At times, however, even he suffered moments of frustration and irritability. One day a friend saw him feverishly pacing the floor like a caged lion. "What's the trouble, Mr. brooks?" he asked.
- "The trouble is that I'm in a hurry, but God isn't!" Haven't we felt the same way many times?
- A. God will not tell us some things instantaneously
- 1. God will sometimes withhold information until **He has prepared us to listen**
 - a) But He hasn't, He has been changing and preparing us to hear His message
 - 2. We must be willing to listen to him patiently, because he is **stretching our faith**
 - a) We might want to say *"Lord, here's my order today. Please give me an answer before I get up off my knees."*
 - b) It may take weeks, months even years to hear an answer
 - c) It may take so long that we even begin to wonder if God hasn't forgotten our request
 - 3. God sometimes delays His answer because He is working to **transform us in to the image of His Son**

- a) He is always working on transforming us
 - b) In fact the number one things that God is concerned with is how much like His Son we are becoming – all else is secondary to Him
- B. What does it take to listen patiently? **First it requires us to listen...**
1. **Quietly**
 - a) The psalmist said, **“Be still, and know that I am God...”** (Ps 46:10)
 - b) If we are to listen to God, we must be quiet and let Him do the talking
 - c) Too many of us, when we pray, simply read off a list of requests, get up, and go on to the next thing in our day
 - d) Instead of listening for his voice we report our requests to Him and move on
 - e) Quietness is essential to listening
 - f) If we are too busy to take the time to listen we won't hear
 - g) If we spend night after night watching television, and then try to listen, we will find our minds jammed with carnal interferences
 - h) It takes time and quietness to prepare to listen to God
 - i) The psalmist said, **“My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him”**
 - j) If we are going to wait patiently we need to take the time to be quiet
 2. **Second it requires us to listen...Attentively**
 - a) Listening to God demands our full attention
 - b) If He speaks through His Word, through His Spirit, through others and through circumstances, then we must live every day attentively and alertly

- c) Someone might say something in passing that gives us a godly warning or rebuke that God intended for us to grow through
 - d) We must have our spiritual antennas fully extended to make sure we pick up on everything
 - e) As I have said many times things that happen in our life are not coincidental.
 - f) The people we met the things that happen are all divinely appointed for our growth but we will miss them if we are not paying attention
3. **Third it requires us to listen...Reverently**
 - a) A reverent heart should be the foundation of hearing God
 - b) We should be in awe that we can speak to the God who hung the sun and world on nothing, the God who created all the details of human life
 - c) It should humble us that this same omnipotent God is quietly willing to listen to us, while at the same time giving direction to the vastness of the universe
 - d) His total, concentrated and undisturbed attention is focused upon us individually
 - e) That ought to humble us and create within us a reverence that acknowledges God for the mighty Creator He is
 4. **Finally, it requires us to listen...Actively**
 - a) To hear God we must actively wait and meditate upon His Word
 - (1) Colossians 3:16 declares, **“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,**

singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord

- (2) If we only know the Word selectively and dwell on one particular favorite subject, we fail to seek the whole counsel of God.
- b) God is precise in His instructions and promises given through His Word
 - (1) Meditation upon God's Word is one of the most wonderful ways we can listen to the Voice of God for divine guidance
- C. How do we listen to God Patiently? We do it by being Quiet, Attentive, Reverent, and Active

Thirdly We Need To Listen...

III. ***Submissively***

- A. We need to listen to God submissively, because sometimes when He speaks to our hearts, we will not like what we hear
 1. When the Lord tells us something we don't want to hear, we may not react in total obedience
 2. God doesn't get hostile over our rebellious spirits, that not His response
 3. He knew how we were going to respond
 4. It may grieve Him when we disobey but He doesn't send a horde of angry angels to destroy us
 5. He knows we will struggle with some things
- B. There will be times when we come to God, listen to Him, and then grapple with what we hear
 1. We may not be consistently disobedient to what we hear, but sometimes we may not understand how or why God is going to perform it
 2. We may be as submissive as we know how at the moment, but still wrestle with what He says

3. Submissions must ultimately accompany listening if we are to fully hear God's Voice
4. James told us that we should be, ***"...doers of the word, and not hearers only"***
5. He goes on to tell us why it is so important to do what God's Word tells us
6. If we don't we are only ***"...deceiving your own selves"*** (Ja 1:22)

Finally, We Need To Listen...

IV. ***Gratefully***

- A. When we come before the Father, we should have a grateful attitude
 1. We should be grateful that Father would love us enough to send His only begotten Son to the cross;
 2. Grateful for the crucifixion
 3. Grateful for the resurrection
 4. Grateful for our salvation
 5. Grateful that God has plucked us out of the kingdom of darkness and put us into the kingdom of light
 6. As Paul explained in Phil 4:6-7 ***"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus"***
- B. Out of the billions of people who make up this universe, God is interested in you and me
 1. He possess intimate knowledge of you in His incomparable, indescribable mind
 2. When you come to him, you should draw near with a thankful heart, because you do not come in contact with a heavenly Father who speaks to the masses, but one who speaks to individuals

3. We have a Heavenly Father who sees individuals not masses
4. When you drive down the highway at 64 MPH and you look out at a cornfield my guess is you don't see the individual corn stock but a blur of row after row of corn stocks. When God looks down on us He doesn't see a blur of row after row of needy people He sees the individual. He hears and responds in the same fashion.
5. That should invoke your unrestrained gratitude

Conclusion: When the Lord came and spoke to Samuel it took even Eli, a supposed man of God, three times before he figured out that it was the Lord calling him. But when he did he gave the young Samuel the best advise any man of God could give, *"the next time you hear the voice calling answer, Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth."* Because Samuel **Listened to God's Voice** God was able to use him to domany great and mighty things in the nation of Israel.

The same is true with each of us; if we would only learn to listen to God's voice he could use us greatly in building His Kingdom. What does it take to listen like a Samuel?

We need to **Listen Expectantly, Patiently, Submissively and Gratefully** because it is only then that we can become the man or woman of God we ought to be.