

# The Voice of the Lord

It is not a small thing when God speaks. Psalm 29:4 says “*The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty*”. Isn’t this something we all should desire? To hear His voice? It’s powerful, it’s full of majesty!

God Almighty, enthroned on high in heaven, speaks to His children on this earth. He desires to commune with us. He desires conversation. To hear what we have to say but then also to speak something to us.

The voice of the Lord is active in our lives, but are we listening?

In Acts chapter 9, Paul has an encounter with Jesus and hears clearly for the first time, the voice of the Lord:

## **Acts 9:1-9 (NKJV)**

1 Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest 2 and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

3 As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. 4 Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”

5 And he said, “Who are You, Lord?”

Then the Lord said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.”

6 So he, trembling and astonished, said, “Lord, what do You want me to do?”

Then the Lord said to him, “Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”

7 And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one. 8 Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. 9 And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

This still stands today as one of the most incredible accounts of God speaking to a person. Could you imagine Jesus speaking to you in this manner? It’s possible. We have evidence that He can and has done it. But it’s not the typical method.

How does God speak to us? When does He speak? What does it sound like? Today we are going to look at some ways that the voice of the Lord comes to us.

## **The voice of the Lord comes when you are trying to serve Him.**

Think about Paul (Saul) in this passage. For those not familiar with Saul/Paul. They are the same guy, these verses say Saul, I'm going to say Paul. Acts 13:9 says "*Saul, who was also called Paul*" He was a Jew so he had a Hebrew name (Saul), but he was a Roman so he had a Roman name (Paul). God didn't change his name but once he became the apostle to the Gentiles, he likely used his Roman name Paul, meaning "small, little", which he was compared to this Jesus he served.

Paul was threatening and arresting any who were of "the Way". If you followed Jesus, Paul was after you. He really thought that He was doing God's work.

Now we know that this clearly was not God's desire for Paul to hunt Christians and throw them in prison or stone them or harass them. But Paul really thought he was doing what was right.

Hear this.....even though he was wrong, Paul **thought** he was doing exactly what God wanted him to do.

But he was wrong, and Jesus spoke. He told Paul what he was doing was wrong. Then Jesus told Paul what was right, and what He really wanted Paul to do.

So many people sit around afraid to make the wrong decision that they do nothing at all. They think "I've gotta hear God first before I'll even move". Sometimes God just wants us to give it a try. Do what you THINK He wants you to do and if you are wrong, you will soon hear the voice of the Lord.

Obviously a part of this is knowing the scriptures, but Paul knew the scriptures. You need more than a knowledge of the book, you need to know the Author!

We are supposed to kind of know His will. We should have SOME kind of idea of what God desires of us. It's all over in His word. We hear it in the worship we sing, in the prayers that are prayed, in the sermons that are preached.

If you think it's God, do it. Don't wait all your life for 7 confirmations. If you make a mistake and you are wrong....you will hear His voice. We've got to stop being so afraid to fail!

The NBA average for field goals made is about 45%. Most players, even great ones, miss over half of their shots. For 3 pointers it's even worse, about 35% made. They can't worry about if it was the right choice to shoot a shot they missed, they just have to go out and do it again.

The MLB average for batting is 25%. They get out 75% of the time they go to bat. Even the best of the best get out 65-70% of the time. They can't just give up and quit. They have to try and try again.

Like Paul, you will hear the voice of the Lord if you are doing whatever you think He wants you to do. And if you're wrong.....

**Proverbs 3:5-6 (NIV)**

5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;  
6 in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

He will make you path straight! But you've got to have a path to straighten. Get up and move!

**The voice of the Lord comes when you need to change direction.**

Paul was doing what He thought God wanted and the voice of the Lord said "you need to change direction". That voice told Paul that this life he had known was over and a new life was about to begin. God was going to do something new!

Most of the time when we want to hear from God, we want encouragement, which is a great thing. But when you hear the voice of the Lord, it's more than an encouragement, He speaks to transform you! God wants to mold and shape you into the image of Jesus!

**Romans 8:29 (NIV)**

29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

We are to know Jesus more and become more like Him! The voice of the Lord is not always going to tell you what you want to hear. It's not always going to be an easy word. Sometimes it will be challenging. Sometimes it's going to involve CHANGE.

If you hear a voice that says you are just fine, no need to change a thing, you need to be on high alert, that's probably not God. If that voice doesn't line up with what the Word of God says, then it's the the voice of the devil!

We all need change and transformation until we are the perfect image of Christ.

**The voice of the Lord shows you your sin.**

Paul was sincere in his desire to serve God but he was still wrong. No matter how right he wanted to be, he wasn't.

Sometimes Christians think because they are sincere in their intentions, that God might let it slide, because "our heart was right". But in those times we forget that sin is still sin and sin is still wrong.

God doesn't look at your life and say well you are going most things right so I'll just ignore the sin since it isn't too bad. That's just not the way it works. God is just and He is holy. He said that we are to be holy as He is holy.

Uncommon. Different from the world. Devoted to Him. Seeking righteousness. Different from what you were. Those are descriptions of someone who is holy, someone who listens to the voice of the Lord when He points out sin.

You don't have to live every day with your thoughts and actions overrun by sin. Jesus came to set you free from the law of sin and death. In Him you have the power to overcome sin. He can change your heart and give you clean and pure motives in everything you do. If only you will listen when His voice speaks of your sin!

### **The voice of the Lord comes in a way you can understand.**

In Acts 26, Paul recalls his conversion story to the king. He mentions how the voice of the Lord was in Aramaic, a distinct dialect of Hebrew. This is how Jesus chose to speak to Paul. Not in a way that was confusing. Not in a way that required a translator but in a way he could understand.

To Paul it was the audible voice of Jesus! To some that might be seeing things in nature. To others it might be in song. To others in metaphors. To others dreams or visions. It might even be different for you each time!

There was a guy dealing with a heavy issue in his life. He was driving down the road and saw two butterflies coming toward him. One hit the windshield and died, the other missed it and lived. He heard that still small voice in his spirit say "If you don't get over your sin issue, that's going to be you and your wife". This message stuck with him. God spoke to him in a way that he could understand and relate to. So he straightened his act up!

The voice of the Lord does not always sound the same to everyone because not everyone understands the same things or language. God uses all kinds of ways to speak to people. And don't say that God can't use that particular way to speak to that person, just because it's not how He speaks to you.

I've had people tell me that God told them something and it didn't sit well in my spirit, I felt it probably wasn't the thing to do but it wasn't unbiblical or sinful, but even in those situations, I try to share wisdom, I try to never tell someone "that wasn't God" because I don't know how God speaks to them!

We also need to remember that, what is clearly the voice of the Lord to you may not be clear to others. When Paul had this conversion experience, the men that were with him, they heard the sound of a voice but didn't understand it.

We see this regularly in the church. Two people can come to the same exact service and have two totally different experiences. One can say it was a great service, they felt the presence of God, He spoke to them in some specific way. And the other can say they didn't get anything out of the service at all.

The question isn't "Is God speaking?" because He is. The real question is "Are you listening?"

He's speaking to you in a way you understand. Are you focusing on Him? Or are you distracted?

### **The voice of the Lord will come through other people.**

This can be a prophetic word, or wisdom, many times it will confirm what God has already spoken to you....even if you don't remember, maybe it was something He's speaking but you aren't listening!

For Paul, if you read on in his story. God sent him to a man named Ananias to receive his sight back. God had already spoke this to Ananias and told him things to say to Paul. It was confirmation. (And I'm pretty sure Paul knew without a doubt that he had heard from God)

God may use a friend, a teacher, a parent, or a preacher to convey His message of truth to us. Their words may come as a warning, a blessing, or as a prophetic truth about our lives. Whether we choose to hear it or ignore it, depends on us.

Ask yourself: "Do their words line up with Scripture? Does this confirm or affirm a truth God has spoken to me?"

I've learned to never completely dismiss what someone shares with me. I receive it, see if it lines up with the word, and pray about it....regardless of whether I "liked it". If it's God, I want it, even if it's challenging.

Here's what a word from God should look like through another person:

#### **James 3:17 (NIV)**

17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

A word from God will NOT come in the form of agreeing with your sin, telling you it's ok or giving you reasons that it's acceptable in your situation. That would be the word of satan and you should talk to someone else!

**The voice of the Lord comes in both sudden and gradual revelation.**

The Lord spoke to Paul that day, and told him some of what he would face as a believer in Jesus. But that was not the last time God spoke to Paul. He continued to give guidance and direction for the rest of his life.

Paul told later of how the Spirit guided him to go this way or that. He told later of God's answer to prayers. Paul listening to God's voice happened that first time, but it continued throughout his life.

So how about you? Maybe you've responded to the voice of the Lord that first time. You came to the Lord, or you obeyed, or you followed his guidance. What about lately? When was the last time you listened for the voice of the Lord in your life? Have you let the Lord speak to you lately?