

“The Lord Had Told Samuel In His Ear”

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What did “the Lord tell Samuel in his ear” and why is it instructional to us today? Saul, the first king of Israel, was to be anointed by Samuel. The way Samuel knew his duty before God was facilitated through the process of his hearing what the Lord said unto him. What Samuel heard “in his ear” that day was “To morrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me” (1 Samuel 9:16). Why this is instructional to us is because we see from the Bible exactly how God spoke to the prophet Samuel, “Now the Lord had told Samuel *in his ear* a day before Saul came, saying...” (v. 15, emphasis added).

Today, many well-intentioned people are relating their belief that God speaks directly to them, but they have learned to say, “God spoke to my heart.” In this way at least two questions they cannot and will not answer temporarily are staved off. One, “what does the voice of God sound like?” and two, “exactly what did God say to you?” Obviously, the second question is more important, but the first could be answered if God spoke to someone today like he spoke to Samuel “in his ear.” The second question is averted by the claim that God “spoke to my heart” because now the recipient of the alleged communication may express what he felt the Lord meant and avoid the touchy problem of relaying accurate wording.

Today, a widespread philosophy among religious people is that God miraculously guides each Christian’s conscience. An abstract of this view appears in *New Dictionary of Theology* by James Innell Packer (1926-), who is a member of the Anglican Church and serves on the Board of Governors’ Professor of Theology at Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia. Packer is considered to be one of the most influential evangelicals in North America according to *Time* magazine (“The 25 Most Influential Evangelicals in America,” February 7, 2005). He wrote that Holy Spirit “*assures* believers that they are children and heirs of God...both through the direct witness of immediate inward certainty and by the indirect testimony of implanted filial instincts and dispositions, from which the reality of the new life may safely be inferred” (p. 317, emphasis in the original). His language is a bit elevated but may fairly be summarized to mean that God miraculously guides each Christian’s conscience.

Today, what everyone needs to know about how the Holy Spirit communicates is that He does so exclusively through His Word, the Bible. Please consider these passages in this regard, “Thou gavest also thy good spirit to instruct them, and withheldest not thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst” (Nehemiah 9:20); “Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness” (Psalms 143:10); “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Note that since the inspired Word thoroughly furnishes its readers “unto *all* good works” that there is not a single good work concerning which the reader

has not been completely informed and instructed. Therefore, the Holy Spirit “instructs” (Neh. 9:20) and “teaches” (Psa. 143:10) *exclusively* through His Word, the Bible.