

There Are No Personal Words From God

Over the years I've met Christians who claimed that God personally told them to do things. It's common to hear people say "God told me to preach this message" or "God told me to phone that person" or "God told me to make that decision". In each case people claim that they weren't acting of their own accord. Instead God Himself ordered them to do whatever they did. They were acting under divine command.

This greatly disturbs me. Whenever someone begins a sentence with "God told me..." I inwardly wince. As soon as a person claims that they're acting under the direct command of God they instantly make themselves unaccountable. Any criticism of their actions becomes impossible. After all, it wasn't *their* idea; they were just doing what God told them to do! God said jump, so they jumped. You can't even have a discussion about what they did because any criticism of them instantly becomes criticism of God. Saying "God made me do it" is an easy way to make sure that no one can question them. It grants total immunity.

However, does God still speak to people like that today? Does He *really* send people divine messages telling them what to do and when to do it? I'm convinced the answer is no. Although God speaks to us through His Word, and although He does guide our lives and watch over us, He doesn't speak to us directly anymore. He may use our consciences to convict us and He may use our friends to remind us of the truth, but He is no longer in the business of talking directly to His people. That's not how He's working in this era of history.

You see, the Bible is all the divine revelation we need:

2 Timothy 3:16-17: "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."

This passage says that the Scriptures have been given to us so that we can be perfect. The material contains within its pages is enough to *thoroughly* furnish us for *all* good works. This means there are no good works which are outside its scope! The Bible has 100% of the divine revelation we need to live in this age. No other revelation is necessary.

Now, the Bible's claim to be sufficient is either true or false. If it's true then we don't need a "personal word from God". We don't need Him to divinely speak to us because He's already told us everything we need to know in His Word. God has *already* spoken! All we need to do is read what He's said.

If God does still speak directly to His people today, outside of the Bible, then 2 Timothy 3:17 is a lie. It means the Bible isn't enough and we need additional information that God failed to supply. In that case the Bible doesn't fully equip us for life but instead leaves us unprepared for many situations. Our only hope is for God to speak to us directly and fill in the critical information that was left out of the Bible. However, that must be wrong! Every word in the Bible is true, including 2 Timothy 3:17, so there can't be personal words from God.

But, some may say, isn't it true that God used to speak directly to His people? Didn't He speak to people through dreams, angels, and so forth? Yes He did, but the Bible tells us He no longer does that. God's method of speaking to us has changed:

Hebrews 1:1-2: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;"

Things are different now. In the past God spoke to people

in many different ways, but now God only speaks to us through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The words and teachings of His Son can be found written in the New Testament. The Bible is complete! We don't need anything more than what the Scripture provides.

Some people think that all throughout the Old Testament the Lord led His people by speaking directly to them, but that's not the case. God actually spoke to very few people in the Old Testament! Although the prophets received many messages from God, the rest of the Israelites didn't. According to Dr. Sam Kurien, "The only individuals who heard from God more than twice in the Old Testament are Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jacob, Aaron, Joshua, David and Solomon. These eight and no more!" Hearing from God wasn't common at all. It was extremely rare. There are a lot of prominent people in the Bible who never heard from God *even one time*, as Gary Gilley points out:

"Below are some of the important characters found in the Old Testament who never heard directly from God as far as we know: Caleb, Esther, Mordecai, Ruth, Joab, Hezekiah, Josiah, Jehoshapat, Jonathan, most of the judges, Ezra, Nehemiah, Shadrack, Meshach and Abd-nego (although they may have been comforted by the Son in the fire). In addition whole categories of key leaders never heard from God personally, including none of Jacob's sons except Joseph, none of the kings of Judah after Solomon, none of the judges except for Gideon, none of the returning exiles and none of David's mighty men or military leaders. This is just a sampling; many more could be cited." (Gary Gilley)

On top of that, when God did speak He did so in a very direct and obvious manner. As Dr. Sam Kurien pointed out, "When God spoke, it was in an audible voice, or on occasions

through a vision or dream. There is not a single instance of God speaking to the mind or heart inaudibly through an inner voice.” Some people today say that “God spoke to my heart”, but *not once in the entire Bible did God ever speak to anyone in that manner*. There's no Biblical evidence that God communicates that way. It's true that the Holy Spirit convicts sinners and helps us understand the Scriptures, but even the Spirit is never depicted as whispering to a person's heart. There's not one instance of that anywhere in the Bible.

Moreover, when God did speak in times past He talked about big-picture issues, not personal life decisions:

“When God did speak in Scripture it almost always dealt with the big picture of what God was doing in the outworking of His redemption program or the life of His people in general. You will search in vain to find God telling people what job to take, how many donkeys to buy, or what land to purchase — except as it was related to the bigger issue of God’s dealings with His people.” (Gary Gilley)

Some people believe that when they're faced with a decision they can ask God what to do and He will divinely speak to them and tell them what decision to make. The problem with this is that the Bible doesn't support it. This type of divine advice is exceedingly rare in the Bible. There were a few men – like King David – who inquired of God, but few people had that privilege, and those who did only used it in the most extreme circumstances. That's never been how life has worked for the average believer.

You simply won't find any verses in the Old or New Testament that say “When you're faced with a decision, ask God about it and He will divinely impress the correct decision upon your heart.” God guides us, yes, but *not* through direct revelation! Instead He speaks to us through His Word. God does shape our

lives but He does so by His divine power – the same power He uses to raise up nations and cast them down. God isn't sitting in Heaven hoping you'll make the right decision so that His plans work out. He is the one in charge, not you.

But, you might say, isn't all of this negated by the fact that person words exist? After all, God really does speak to people and tell them to do things – sometimes even audibly! People pray for guidance and then in their minds they suddenly know what to do. Sometimes people get the urge to call someone, and lo and behold something good comes of it. Isn't that proof God still speaks directly to His children today?

I'm afraid not. There's an enormous difference between “I suddenly knew what to do” and “God Himself told me what to do”. Those two things aren't the same! You are deciding that the thought you had (or the voice you heard) must be from God. You're ruling out the possibility that it might be your own idea, and the reason you're doing so is because you believe God talks directly to you. Therefore, if you ask God what to do and you suddenly think of something, you're deciding whatever you just thought of must have come from God. *But that's not the only possible explanation.*

You see, God can't lie and God can't be wrong. Whenever He speaks He does so authoritatively. In fact, the way prophets were tested was by evaluating the outcome of their predictions. If they ever got *anything* wrong then they were false prophets and God demanded they be executed for proclaiming lies in His name:

Deuteronomy 18:20-22: "But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the

thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him."

So are these “personal words from God” 100% accurate? Absolutely not. Sometimes they work out and sometimes they don't. When something good happens people claim that's proof the message came from God, but when things go terribly wrong they say that they “misunderstood” – or they blame God for giving them bad advice! These “personal words from God” can't be trusted 100% of the time, and that means they can't be from God. A prophet with that kind of track record in Old Testament times was condemned as a false prophet and wasn't to be trusted *at all*.

The Bible has a lot of negative things to say about “personal words from God”. It says that the Scriptures are all we need to thoroughly furnish us for all good works, so no other revelation is required. It says God has stopped speaking to people through dreams and visions and direct revelation, and now speaks to us through His Son. It says very few people in all of history have ever heard directly from God Himself, and God has never talked to anyone by impressing something upon their mind. It also said that anything that's not accurate 100% of the time isn't the voice of God.

All of this tells me that “personal words from God” are an attempt to evade responsibility for our actions. Instead of being honest and saying that we were the ones who decided to do what we did, we claim it was God's doing and we can't be held responsible. Instead of admitting that the vision was *not* from God or that the dream was just a dream, we claim that God is giving us extra information He didn't include in the Bible – even though 2 Timothy 3:17 says the Bible is enough to cover all situations that we will ever encounter.

That last point is easy to overlook. If personal words from God exist then that means the Bible is an open book and can be added to at any time by anyone who claims to have heard from

God. It means the Bible isn't finished but is still a work in progress. After all, it's impossible for Jesus to speak with anything less than absolute authority! If Jesus Christ, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, told someone something then whatever He said is absolute truth and should be added to our Bibles. After all, Jesus has spoken and every one of His words is flawless! It means we should be busy collecting all of this new revelation and adding it to our Bibles so everyone can know what *else* Jesus had to say.

This line of reasoning is ridiculous, but it's exactly where belief in "personal words from God" ends up. The Bible doesn't teach that it's an open book which can be expanded as the need arises. Instead we're told that we should contend for the faith that was *once* delivered to the saints:

Jude 1:3: "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was **once** delivered unto the saints."

You can search your Bible from cover to cover and you won't find any verse which says "The Scripture is a work in progress. There's more to add as time goes on, so stay tuned!" The Bible is a closed book. You can't add a Book of Mormon or a Book of Things That Jesus Revealed To Me.

This is how one person put it:

"The doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture does not imply that God cannot add any more words to those he has already spoken to his people. It rather implies that man cannot add on his own initiative any words to those that God has already spoken. Furthermore, it implies that in fact God has not spoken to mankind any more words which he requires us to believe or obey other than those which we have now in the

Bible." (Grudem)

Does this mean God will never speak to His people again? Of course not. But it does mean that for now, in this age and in this life, the Bible is all we need. When we crave a "personal word from God" we're telling God that His Word isn't enough. We're saying that He left out important information which we urgently need. We're telling Him that His Word doesn't thoroughly equip us for all good works, even though He promised us it does. That doesn't honor God or His Word.

I think it's a bad thing to for people to claim that God told them to do something (apart from what He's commanded us in His Word), and I think it's a serious error to claim that God has given us new divine revelation. There are no personal words from God. The Bible is all that we've been given, and it's all that we need.