

I have to admit that I have a bad habit when I watch the weather report on the evening news. You see, I really want to know what they have to say the weather is going to be the next day, but it takes them so long to get around to the actual forecast, that many times I lose interest. The TV is still on, and I am still in the same room, and the sound waves probably make their way into my ears, but I get distracted and do not remember hearing what the forecast was. I did not give the weatherman my full attention, so I missed what he had to say. Of course, another bad habit that I have is when I do actually hear the weather report, I often doubt whether it will really happen as they say it is going to. When they are forecasting a big snow storm, I am doubtful that it will as bad as they are predicting. So again, it does not do me much good to listen to what they have to say. There are many times when we listen to one another in much the same way — either we do not actually hear what they are trying to say to us, or we do not believe what they are telling us. In either case, it does not do us much good to listen if that is how we are going to do it. This morning, in the Word of God before us, we have an instance of one who heard words, but did not understand their true meaning right away. In the same way that Samuel finally said, **SPEAK, LORD, YOUR SERVANT IS LISTENING**, we are to listen to the Words which the Lord is speaking to us. Like Samuel, 1) we are to recognize Who is speaking to us, and then, 2) we are to accept what we hear.

You may recall that Samuel's mother had prayed earnestly to the Lord that He would grant her a child. In return for a child, she promised that she would dedicate him back to the Lord's service. The Lord had answered her prayer, and she kept her promise of returning that son to the Lord's service. When he was old enough, she took him to the tabernacle to serve the Lord there. The high priest at that time was Eli. Samuel served Eli from that time on. Eli was now getting old, and his eyesight was not very good, so he relied greatly upon the help that young Samuel was able to provide. One night Samuel was lying down in the temple where the ark of the Lord was. **"Then the Lord called Samuel. Samuel answered, 'Here I am.' And he ran to Eli and said, 'Here I am; you called me.'"** (4-5) Samuel heard a voice calling his name, so he naturally assumed it was Eli who needed some help. So, gladly, willingly, he ran to help his aged teacher. But Eli had not called to Samuel, so he told him to go back and lie down. Samuel did what he was told. The same thing happened again, and again Eli told Samuel that he had not called, but to go lie down once again.

The writer of this book then adds some words of explanation. He tells us that the Lord had not been speaking to prophets for some time, and this was the first time that the Lord was speaking to Samuel, and that is why Samuel did not know Who it was that was speaking to him. The Lord called a third time to Samuel, and once again, Samuel went to help Eli. **"Then Eli realized that the Lord was calling the boy. So Eli told Samuel, 'Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'"** (8-9) Eli the high priest figured out what was happening. So he told Samuel to lie down once again, just as before, and if he heard his name being called, simply to respond by saying that the Lord should speak because he was listening. And Samuel was more than willing to do so.

This situation with Samuel is quite unique because we do not expect the Lord God to speak directly to us. That is why Samuel did not know what was happening, so kept running to Eli. Samuel did not recognize the Word of the Lord. We also need to be on the look out that we recognize the Word of the Lord when it comes to us. No, it will not come to us in a vision or directly, but it does come to us whenever we read the Bible. We need to recognize that it is the Lord Himself Who is speaking to us as we read or hear the Bible being read to us. It is not just a collection of nice stories. It is not a self-help book that tells us how to have a happy life on earth. It is not a book filled with morals that we are to live by. The Bible is God's Word — it is the way in which God has chosen to speak to you and to me. And when we keep that in mind, we will be very eager to hear and read and study that Word at each and every opportunity. We will never be able to get enough of it, for the Lord Himself has chosen to reveal Himself to us in that Word. The prophets of the Old Testament and the apostles of the New Testament have recorded through inspiration the very message which our almighty, loving Savior knew we would need to keep us strong in the faith to the very end. Therefore, as we recognize Who it is who is speaking to us, we will want to listen very carefully, saying, "Speak, Lord, for Your servant is listening."

The amazing thing, then, is that the Lord does speak to us, just as He has promised. Therefore it is incumbent upon us to accept what He has to say. That is exactly what Samuel did. While Samuel was lying down again, **"The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, 'Samuel! Samuel!' Then Samuel said, 'Speak, for your servant is listening.'"** (10) Now recognizing Who it was that was speaking to him, Samuel was

quiet and listened to the Lord's words. Samuel listened attentively, so as to hear and understand the meaning of those words. Samuel was not about to let his mind wander onto other things while the Lord was speaking to him. He wanted to hear every syllable that the Lord had to say to him.

The message which the Lord gave to Samuel that night was not good news. In fact, Samuel did not want to tell Eli what the Lord had to say to him. But Eli made him tell. The Lord told of the destruction that was going to come to Eli's family because of the wickedness of his sons. Even Eli, when he heard this, accepted what the Lord had said in this vision. Both Samuel and Eli would have preferred a much different message from the Lord. But still that did not keep them from accepting the message in faith. When the Lord speaks, God's children listen in faith. They may not always like what they hear, but they know that the Lord would speak only the truth, and therefore His words are to be accepted in faith. Samuel became a great prophet of the Lord, and the Lord spoke to him many more times in his life. Some of the things that the Lord spoke were great blessings, at other times they were great punishments, but whatever the Lord spoke through Samuel, it happened just that way.

In our acceptance of the Lord's message, we can be assured that every Word of it will stand forever. There may be things which are included in the Bible which we may not really like. But that is not the point. The Lord gives us His Word to listen to it carefully, and to accept it totally. We will never want to ignore anything which the Lord has said, or to change it to suit our own desires. Instead, we will listen very carefully, and then accept totally everything which the Lord says to us.

That is not the way that I listen to weather forecasts. I may let my mind wander to other things, or I may disagree with their computer driven forecast. In other words, many times it does me no good even to listen to what they have to say. But that is not the way that I listen to the Word of the Lord. When that is spoken, I want to give it my full and complete attention because there is nothing more important than what the Lord has to say to me. And then, after I hear it, I will accept it in faith, even if it is not what my sinful flesh had hoped it might hear. May each and every one of us say with Samuel. **SPEAK LORD, FOR YOUR SERVANT IS LISTENING.**