

“THE LORD TOLD ME”

2 Peter 1:16-21

INTRODUCTION

- A widower made a visit to a widow that he fancied, and said to her, “The Lord told me you are to become my wife.” She replied, “Well he didn’t tell me that!”
- What actually happened there?
 - ✓ Did God really tell him that?
 - ✓ Did he misinterpret what God said?
 - ✓ Did he confuse his own feelings and inclinations with the prompting of God?
 - ✓ Was he just using God’s name for his own personal ends, to justify to himself and to convince others that he should get his way?
- Perhaps you have heard people say, “The Lord told me...”, or perhaps you sometimes make such a statement yourself
- Is this appropriate language for Christians to use? Is it Biblically justified? What are the implications of making such declarations?
- Since the advent of the Pentecostal movement a little over a century ago, many professing Christians have come to expect to “hear God’s voice” speaking to them
- There are instructions formulated to help Christians “hear God’s voice”; one such guide gives the following four steps:
 1. Be still: Quiet yourself down

2. Look: Fix your eyes on Jesus
 3. Listen: Tune to spontaneous flow
 4. Write it down
- This is dangerous teaching that is leading people away from God and his truth, and sadly this charismatic error has crept into Baptist churches

What is wrong with saying “the Lord told me”?

I. IT DISTORTS THE SCRIPTURAL TEACHING

A. God has spoken to men in the past

1. Throughout the Old Testament there are a great many instances where God spoke directly to individuals at specific times (eg. Cain, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Gideon, Samuel, David, Solomon, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Amos, Zechariah)
2. Note that God did not speak to everyone, and there were long periods where God was not speaking by direct revelation (eg. during Israel’s bondage in Egypt, between the testaments – 400 years both times)
3. In the New Testament, God spoke directly to apostles and prophets (Acts 8:29 9:4-6,10-16; 10; 13:2; 16:6; 18:9-10)
4. Yet even in the apostolic period, a time of signs, miracles and prophetic revelation, it was not common, nor was it the normative Christian experience to receive direct revelation from God

5. The revelation from God was always related to gospel ministry, not to decision-making in their personal lives
- B. The gift of prophecy is no longer operating in the church
1. With the completion of the Scriptures towards the end of the 1st Century AD, the sign gifts of tongues, healing and prophecy have ceased from the church
 2. The purpose of those gifts was to “confirm the word” (Mark 16:20) of the apostles (2 Corinthians 12:12)
 3. Prior to the completion of the New Testament, knowledge and prophecy was “in part”, but now “that which is perfect is come” we have the full revelation of God to the church in the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 13:8-10)
 4. In the New Testament epistles, which form the primary source of instruction for Christian doctrine and living, we are not told to listen to God’s audible voice anywhere
 5. Anyone declaring “the Lord told me”, claiming God gave them direct revelation, is Scripturally ignorant, a false teacher, and should be treated with great caution

II. IT DISHONOURS THE NAME OF GOD

- A. God’s name is to be hallowed, not to be taken in vain (Exodus 20:7)
1. When someone says “God told me”, they are claiming to be speaking God’s word as a messenger and prophet of Jehovah – this is a serious thing

2. For a person to pretend their opinions and feelings are God's word is great presumption
3. It is blasphemy, using God's name in vain to say "the Lord told me" when he has not
4. "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." (Deuteronomy 18:20)

B. It is human pride that robs God of his glory

1. Our chief end is the glory of God, therefore everything we do or say should be to honour and glorify him
2. When people claim "the Lord told me", it elevates the person to appear that they have a special connection to God, promoting their credibility
3. It also serves to shut down opposing views, because if the Lord told them then to oppose them would be to oppose God
4. It shifts the blame of wrong advice or predictions from the person onto God
5. Such a proud attitude is the opposite of the meek and humble spirit that God's people ought to have (1 Peter 5:5)
6. Question: If we are not to be guided by God's direct voice or divine impressions or experiences, what is the means by which God communicates his will to us?

III. IT DENIES THE SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE

- A. The Scripture alone is our infallible guide for all matters of life
1. “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)
 2. “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Peter 1:3)
 3. “Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors.” (Psalm 119:24)
 4. All the answers are in the Scripture
 - a. Many people go to Scripture but mishandle it, twisting it to conform to their carnal motives and to justify their sin
 - b. We must rightly divide the word of truth, using sound methods of hermeneutics, to find what God actually says about a situation
 5. It requires effort and diligence to study the Scripture to know God’s will
 6. Too many people want the easy way of following their fleshly opinions and feelings

7. What is our ultimate authority? God's word or our experience? One is objective and unchanging; one is subjective and changing
 8. This is the doctrine of *Sola scriptura*
- B. God's will *can* be determined if we diligently seek to know it
1. Peter Masters in his book, *Steps for Guidance* uses Psalm 25 as a pattern for the Christian to seek and know God's will for the decisions he faces
 - a. Step 1 – Prayer and Submission (1-6)
 - b. Step 2 – 'Clearing the Decks' (7)
 - c. Step 3 – Using the Scriptures (5)
 - d. Step 4 – Weighing Pros and Cons (9)
 - e. Step 5 – The Overruling of God (8,12)
 - f. Step 6 – Assurance or Unease (13-15)
- C. Our hearts and minds remain corrupted by our remaining sin and ought not to be trusted
1. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9)
 2. "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered." (Proverbs 28:26)
 3. Your feelings and impressions may come from your deceitful and wicked heart, not from God

D. We need to have a proper esteem and value of what we have in the Scripture – the very words of God!

1. God's word is magnified above all his name (Psalm 138:2)
2. We ought to esteem God's words more than our necessary food (Job 23:12)
3. Psalm 119 shows the believer's proper attitude of love, devotion and obedience to God's words

CONCLUSION

1. If you have been guilty of claiming "the Lord told me", you must recognise it as sin, repent of it and cease from it
2. How should we deal with those who are making these blasphemous statements?
 - ✓ Deal with them gently
 - ✓ Thank them for their advice
 - ✓ Ask, "What makes you sure it was from God?"
 - ✓ Ask, "Did he speak audibly? What did his voice sound like? Deep baritone voice? Or a higher sweeter tenor?"
 - ✓ Ask, "How did you react? Did you fall on your face in dread like the men in Scripture did when they heard God's voice?"
 - ✓ Ask, "Did you really hear God, or is it more of an impression you felt? Is it something you feel is right?"

- ✓ Show them it is sinful to use God's name in vain and counsel them to cease from it
3. The only time we can authoritatively and honestly claim "God said" anything is when we quote Scripture
 4. We must take great care with our words
 - ✓ "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." (Matthew 12:36-37)
 - ✓ "But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." (Matthew 5:37)
 - ✓ "But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation." (James 5:12)
 5. Even the prophet Nathan had to be corrected for his hasty advice to David (2 Samuel 7:3ff)
 6. May God give us grace to be humble in our hearts and our speech; to maintain his honour; and to submit ourselves to the word of God as our only source of divine revelation