

Chapter 21 | Rebuilding the Walls of Brokenness

Many of us were familiar with the film critic duo Siskel and Ebert. Gene Siskel died in 1999. Then, in 2006, Robert Ebert lost his lower jaw and his voice to complications from cancer. He has since relied on Post-it notes, his writing, and various automated voices. The kind you find on your laptop. He types in the words and then pushes a button that translates his written words into spoken words that come out of his speakers.

One voice was called Alex. A generic American accent with no emotion. Very robotic. He had used a British accent named Lawrence. But no off-the-shelf automated voice matched his distinctive voice, a voice that millions knew from his show, *At the Movies*, for so many years. The voice he most wanted was his own.

Enter CereProc. A Scottish company that customizes text-to-speech software for voiceless customers. robot. The company custom-builds voices by mining an individual's own archived voice recordings and piecing together, syllable by syllable, Ebert's voice. When it finishes its work, Ebert will sound like Ebert. At least more so than Alex or Lawrence do.

Sometimes we don't miss a voice until it goes silent. At the end of the Old Testament there is a period of 400 years often referred to as "the silent years." Years without any prophets or leaders whose words or lives were recorded in Scripture. Years where there was no voice from God.

But before the silence Ezra read the word of God to the people. His desire was that they rebuild the wall around Jerusalem for protection. And God's greater desire was to rebuild the hearts of his people. The men, women and children gathered together. They heard the word. They understood the word. And then they did the word.

You can hear God's voice in the same way these people did. Through his word. It's not Alex's voice. It's not Lawrence's voice. It's his voice. When you hear it there will be a response. The Israelites wept. Others have repented. Still others have heard good news and rejoiced. And you? If you hear it today, it can rebuild your life.

Ebert's real voice may never be heard "live" again. But God's is still speaking today. You only need to gather the men, women, and children, open his book, and listen.