

Hearing the Voice of the Lord

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

*"Think of it carefully, study it prayerfully,
Deep in thine heart let its oracles dwell.
Ponder its mysteries, slight not its histories,
None can e'er love it too fondly or well."*

Every time I consider the lines of this poem, I am broken. Oh, the Word of God is unfathomable. Yet, so many Christians choose to ignore the voice of God. They just will not make themselves available to hear Him speak to them.

Throughout my years of ministry, I have found that many marriages and relationships do not work well for one reason: The people involved do not choose to hear God speak. They will not receive the Word of God in meekness, therefore they cannot speak for Him to the other party. They do not have His mind.

This is a very important booklet. It details the vital principle of hearing God through the Word, through His Spirit, and through pulpits

that honor His Word. My prayer is that we will let the truth penetrate our hearts and inspire many of us to ask God to give us an ear to hear His voice in these perilous days.

Chapter One

HEARING GOD WITH NO EXCUSE

“And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake:

“And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.

“And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?” (1 Kings 19:11-13).

“And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth”

(1 Samuel 3:10).

“Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the LORD, and I will not keep anger for ever.

“Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the LORD” (Jeremiah 3:12-13).

“O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD” (Jeremiah 22:29).

One of the things God is after more than anything in this world is for His people to hear Him speak. God loves to speak to individuals, and He loves it when individuals love to hear His voice.

Think about it. Suppose you were married and your spouse never said a word. What if he would say things occasionally, but mostly he only initiated insulting silence? Think of children who rebel and run away from home. Often, the first thing that happens is that they stop speaking to their parents.

God loves to have us listen to Him. It is a very solemn thing to have our Creator and Re-

deemer speak to us. What's more, He loves to have us communicate with Him on a personal level. That is a relationship: We hear God speak, we speak to God, and we speak what we hear from God to others.

How Much Do I Let God Speak to Me?

"Master, which is the great commandment in the law?

"Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matthew 22:36-37).

One of the great issues that will be addressed at the Bema Seat judgment in heaven (where God evaluates the works of every believer) will concern how much I let God love me and speak to me (1 John 4). This is critical, inasmuch as faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (Romans 10:17).

Another question will center on how much, through God, I loved myself. He wants us to love ourselves. In Matthew 22:39, God tells me to love others as I love myself. So the next issue will be how much did I love others (1 John 3:16). And, finally, how much did I love the lost (Matthew 28:19).

There are many voices in the world and in

the satanic atmosphere to contend with. In Exodus 32, Moses came down from the mountain after speaking with God face to face, and found that Aaron had made a golden idol. Aaron said, "I only did it because of the voices of the people." Saul made a similar excuse when he presented an offering out of order: "I was listening to what the people said to do."

Hear Am I, Lord

In 1 Samuel 3, the Lord called to Samuel several times before the young man recognized who was speaking. Beautifully, Samuel responded, "Hear am I, Lord, speak to me, thy servant." God helps us to hear Him in this way. He wants to speak to us so definitively. He really wants to get people's attention. "Earth, hear Me speak! I created you. I died for each one of you. Hear Me!"

In Jeremiah 37, the prophet had to tell the king it was too late. "God asked you to hear Him, but you refused. Now, it is too late. Judgment and destruction will come upon the land."

It is so easy to ignore God's voice. That leads to not hearing Him when He speaks to us on serious issues. Then, we won't speak to Him, nor do we speak for Him to the lost on a consis-

tent basis. All these things go together.

God spoke to Israel through her leaders and prophets. He spoke through Moses. He spoke to Israel through Isaiah about her rebellion. He talked to Ezekiel about Israel's backsliding. He spoke to Jeremiah and said, "Israel does not hear Me" (see Jeremiah 13:11). God is always speaking to His people.

From Genesis to Revelation, God established a complete canon of Scripture to speak to us. And yet, through familiarity and busy schedules, precious, godly, sacred Christians often do not hear God speak to them.

Chapter Two

THE PLEADING OF THE FATHER

“Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?” (Hebrews 10:29).

Many people have insulted God. They have heard Him but did not listen, and did despite to the Spirit of Grace by stepping on the blood of the covenant, treating it as an unholy thing.

In Acts 7:51 the people resisted God. They did hear what He said. “That’s good, God spoke and we have heard,” they said. With their actions, however, they dismissed the voice of God. The Thessalonians listened and proclaimed, “This is what we have been waiting for! This is what we have needed. Now God has spoken; we will do what God has said.” But they did not do it, and as a result they quenched

the Spirit (1Thessalonians 5:19).

“And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

“And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:30-32).

This passage provides the solution for preventing improper relationships. It is so crucial that we maintain a pure relationship with the Lord so we can hear Him and be led by His Holy Spirit. If we grieve the Spirit, we will not have proper relationships with other people. We may think that we do, and our relationships may seem very normal and good. But unless we are hearing from God, we can easily fall into familiar, soulish relationships that are not redemptive in nature.

It is essential that we become what God wants us to become and do what He would have us do. We need to make ourselves available to be taught what God wants to teach us and to apply what we receive from Him. For that to

happen, we need to hear the voice of the Lord.

God Reasons in Compassion

“Wherefore I will yet plead with you, saith the LORD, and with your children's children will I plead” (Jeremiah 2:9).

“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18).

The word “plead” is very specific in that it relates to compassion and struggle. God was struggling with Israel, trying to impress on them the correct way to raise their children. “You may love and honor them, but you need to instruct them correctly,” God was saying. In His compassion, He begged them to follow Him.

Imagine this scene: A woman was on a ledge on the twelfth floor of a building. She was distraught and ready to jump, to take her life. A police detective kept talking to her, but she threatened to leap if he came closer. Then, her husband showed up and began to plead with her. As he pleaded for her to come down, the detective was able to intervene by grabbing her, and they saved her life. Obviously, she had been listening to the voices of despair and self-de-

struction.

In Jeremiah 30:13, God declares that He will plead for us. He will plead for us to hear Him. "There is none to represent you," Jesus says. "No one will plead for you, so I will plead your case."

God is after us to hear Him, and He is after us to speak for Him. He wants us to speak to the world, that they might hear the voice of the Lord and receive Him as their Savior.

Chapter Three

MEASURED BY WHAT WE HEAR

“And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.

“He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:47-48).

At the Bema Seat, Jesus Christ is going to measure our lives according to the spoken Word received and applied by faith. “I did not come to judge the world; I did not come to condemn it,” Jesus says. “That wasn’t My purpose in coming. This is what will judge you: the Word I have spoken.”

Oh, the spoken Word. When the preacher is hearing from God and we choose to listen, his sermons can change us. I cannot begin to tell you how important it is to be careful to hear, to pay attention and to concentrate, when the Bible

is being proclaimed. This is so crucial.

In Revelation 2 and 3, God speaks to the seven churches. The Holy Spirit addresses each church individually, exhorting them to receive, believe, and apply the whole counsel of the Word of God. People who only go to church once every three weeks are going to regret it at the Bema Seat. Why? Because they do not hear God speak to them. They do not purpose to put themselves in the way to receive the Word of God in meekness (Genesis 24:27).

They know that they should be in church, but knowing it is not enough. We need to make ourselves available to hear and then to obey. Death is all around us. Any one of our hearts could stop beating this instant. Let me plead with you: Be faithful to your local assembly. Go to every service you can possibly get to, so that when you are face-to-face with God you can say to Him, "I heard from You."

Hearing God Brings Results

I remember a fire in Buckfield, Maine. A three-story house was ablaze and the father just froze. He couldn't move because his eight-year-old boy was trapped on the third floor. The father could not move. Then, someone shouted, "Third

floor!" The firemen scrambled up their ladders to rescue the boy.

Someone spoke, someone listened, and someone was saved.

The great inventor Thomas Edison lost a decade of work in a fire. His son told him, "You are sixty-seven years old. You must be completely discouraged!"

"I am not," Edison answered. "Scores of mistakes were burnt up in that fire."

Three weeks later, Edison invented the phonograph. When asked how he could do this and remain so quiet in the midst of trouble, Edison responded, "Because God spoke to me."

Obedience Brings Fruit that Lasts

In the midst of our lives, we can become pre-occupied with invisible and inaudible stressors. For whatever reason, the Word of God becomes abstract. Even people with sincere, pure hearts can listen but not receive His Word because they are distracted by the wrong things.

The answer to avoiding this is in Psalm 18:44: "As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto me." By choosing to obey as soon as we hear, the Word becomes substance.

I know of a couple that was separated. Both of them kept coming to church, but they would sit on opposite sides of the sanctuary. One day, they heard a penetrating message—a word from God on reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:19-20). They now had a choice to make. Through the pastor, God had spoken His mind on reconciliation, and they could choose to obey it. They also could have chosen to ignore God’s voice and treat the truth as an abstraction, something unclear and open to private interpretation. But both were listening and both made the right choice. God’s Word became the substance for a brand-new beginning in their lives together.

Oh, it is so vital that as soon as we hear, we obey God’s Word. Then, even though we may not “feel” a thing, we will be quickened to live in the fullness of God’s life and to experience victory in our lives.

“Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give thee my loves” (Song of Solomon 7:12).

I have been deeply impressed by this tremendous verse. For every single thing we do in response to hearing Him, God gives us a special

love. In other words, more than giving just a cup of water, God will give us a special love for people and for what we do that brings fruit. Our labor of love will not be forgotten when He checks the vineyard.

Let me say this: for every word spoken, for every smile given, for every thing done in His name, God will give us a special love for all eternity. You cannot even shake someone's hand in the Spirit of God without receiving more of His love. And it all begins with hearing the voice of the Lord (Matthew 25:35-45).

CONCLUSION

“For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it” (Hebrews 4:2).

We must learn to hear the Word of God in meekness. Put yourself in the place where the Word of God is spoken. Mix faith with what you hear. Allow His words to be planted in the soil of your hearts.

Until we learn to do this, we really haven’t heard God speak. Sure, we may appreciate the gifts and preaching style of preachers and teachers. We can enjoy what is said, we may like how it is said. We can respect the communication.

But, are we really hearing God speak?

In the integrity of our hearts, we must allow the Word to become substance to us. By hearing Him speak and by responding with obedience, His Word will produce in us a faith that pleases Him.

This obedience to His loving words is the key to receiving eternal rewards at the Bema Seat. Our hearts are quickened according to His word for just this reason: As soon as we hear, we obey.