



obrook



by David Alsobrook

*Hearing
With Your
Heart*

by David Alsobrook

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*"My Sheep hear My
voice..."*

(John 10:27)

1

My Sheep Hear My Voice

As a boy growing up in a parsonage I learned quite early what preachers are like "out of the pulpit" (as the common saying goes).

Dad was a sincere, hard working pastor, who tried to live what he believed, but some of his guest evangelists were a different story! As a child I was shocked at the hardness, indifference, and professional performance attitudes which were often displayed by the more well-known evangelists of our denomination.

Nowadays I think back about the "professionalism" that so repulsed me as a boy whenever I encounter other evangelists, prophets, and teachers who privately brag about their "program" in an effort to impress me about their ministries. By the grace of God I have been able to steer clear of these same mistakes in the ministry, but I have had to deal with another area of my life in which "professionalism" had achieved a subtle foothold.

I want to share this with you so you can avoid the ditch I fell into over a long period of time. There is just as much danger in your becoming a "professional Christian" as there is for any preacher to become an actor. There is a singular pitfall that we both *must* avoid: ***the error of not hearing God's daily voice!***

*"Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, **Today if ye will hear His voice, Harden not your hearts...**"*
(Hebrews 3:7).

"See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused Him that spake on

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earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven"
(Hebrews 12:25).

I have noticed some real dangers in recent years as I travel the nation from corner to corner. One of them is the current wave that we can only, or chiefly, hear from God *through others*.

This bizarre concept has invented a religious phraseology to accompany it; a phraseology *which is found nowhere in Scripture!*

The use of these phrases substitutes for plainly saying "the word of the Lord came unto me", "the Spirit bears witness" or "thus saith the Lord." Yet, by employing this "lingo" one is perceived as being spiritually minded.

Religious jargon catches on quickly and soon we are unconsciously adopting such phrases ourselves. Here's a few of them:

"I feel (or sense) in my spirit..."

"I feel (or am) impressed..."

"It seems to me that..."

The Bible says in over a hundred instances that God spoke to someone and they knew He had. The closest any of this comes to the Word of God is Paul's admission, "I had no rest in my spirit", but the reason given was *"because I found not Titus my brother"* (2 Corinthians 2:13).

Why are most Spirit filled believers hesitant to say, "the Lord spoke to me"? Here's a plausible answer...

Most of us can go back to our early days in this walk when the Lord indeed spoke to us in our prayer times and throughout our day to day schedules as our heart went out to Him in praise. We would tell people, "Today when I was

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praying the Lord said such and such to me." Usually we saw instant confirmation that we had "heard" correctly, but soon something happened to almost everyone of us which soured us. After this particular event occurred we rarely again said the Lord told us something, but adopted the unscriptural phrases noted above.

What particular event am I referring to? Somewhere along the way we made a statement which later proved to be a personal embarrassment: "The Lord spoke to me last week that such and such will happen this week."

When the event failed to occur our brothers and sisters kindly poured salt into our hurting heart with such "helpful criticisms" as "YOU MISSED IT, BROTHER!" and maybe, even, "ARE A YOU A FALSE PROPHET?" Ouch! That made the hurt even worse, didn't it?

So, from then on, we never again claimed divine inspiration on any thought that came to us, *even when deep down inside we knew it was the voice of God*. Instead we said, "I feel we ought to do this or that." Others mistook it for our personal opinion, rather than the authoritative voice of God, and usually paid little attention to it. This would cause us to churn inside, wouldn't it? But what more could we say? After all, wouldn't it be immature to say "the Lord told me" this or that? Thus we started on the road to religious professionalism (and such nice flesh it is!) instead of walking in the Spirit. Should we wonder why we are in confusion much of the time?

Jesus said, "*My sheep hear My voice...*" (John 10:27). Are you one of His sheep? If you claim the one, why can't you claim the other? His sheep hear His voice.

Where does the Bible say if we miss God once we are forever condemned to walk "as mere men" and must "lean on our own understanding"? Why can't we have "ears to hear what the Spirit is saying" today?

Modern theologians get around the many exhortations

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in Scripture to hear the voice of God by asserting that He no longer speaks to us today since He gave us the written Word.

This assertion cannot hold water, however, as most agree that 65 of the 66 books were written by the time the Apostle John was banished to the Isle of Patmos (near the end of the first century). All the exhortations to the seven churches in Asia Minor were concluded in the same manner: *"He that hath an ear, **let him hear** what the Spirit saith unto the churches"* (Revelation 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6, 13,22). The last chapter in the Bible commands, *"**And let him that heareth** say, Come"* (verse 17). The fact we now have the Word does not exclude us from the Voice.

Is it not further true that the written Word of God, which is applied to our hearts by the Holy Spirit, is not the sole medium of communication between the Heavenly Father and His earthly children? Any voice that contradicts His Word is clearly not His, but can He not speak to us directly concerning specific needs and give us specific direction? Is this not one of the purposes of fellowship with God? Did not our Savior promise the Holy Spirit would speak to us, even concerning things to come? Did He not speak to the early believers? If your answer to any of these questions is "no", I would implore you to consider the following:

"And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend... Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (Exodus 33:11; John 15:14).

"I will hear what God the LORD will speak: For He will speak peace unto His people, and to His saints: but let them not turn again to folly (sin)" (Psalm 85:8).

"And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee,

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saying This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left" (Isaiah 30:21).

"...and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out...and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice...My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me" (John 10:3,4,27).

"Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come" (John 16:13).

"Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot" (Acts 8:29).

"While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold three men seek thee" (Acts 10:19).

"As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them" (Acts 13:2).

There are plenty more references, but the above should suffice for any who doubt the validity of my point. Let me give one example of the need of hearing the Voice.

After I had ministered on healing with Willard Thiessen on his Canadian program "It's A New Day" I thought it would be nice to go to a Winnipeg mall and pick up a gift for Dianne. (We had been apart almost two weeks.)

Willard and Betty provided a car and gave me specific directions to the shopping mall so I wouldn't have any trouble finding it.

My mind was occupied with thoughts of finding a

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suitable gift for my wife; my spirit was still rejoicing in God's presence which had heavily pervaded the studio during the broadcast.

As I was driving I glanced down the road at an intersecting street sign. Quite to my surprise the Lord spoke to me and ordered me (it came in the form of an urgent command) to turn onto the intersecting street.

In the natural I was somewhat uncomfortable because I did not know my way around Winnipeg very well and because I was driving someone else's automobile. I delayed my obedience until the last possible moment thinking it would not hurt to obey God, which caused me to laugh as I made the turn.

I had driven only a few blocks when I recognized a lady I knew from a retreat I had conducted the week before near the U.S. border. I was surprised to see her standing, in what I assumed, was her front yard, as if she expected someone. When she recognized me her face beamed with joy and she excitedly motioned me into her driveway. "He sent you, He sent you!" she said. "Praise the Lord," I agreed.

The previous week, during the retreat, I had counselled with this lady. Jane's (assumed name) marriage was in trouble, due in large part to her husband's bitterness and backslidden condition. Although Jim (assumed name) had received the baptism with the Holy Spirit five years earlier he had rebelled against the Lord due to strife in their local church. Jim had taken up his former vices and would barely speak to Jane. He buried himself in his work and spent little time with his wife. Jane resented his stubbornness and rebellion which drove the wedge in further.

I naturally assumed he was at work. That was my second surprise...he was home recuperating from severe dental work. Normally he refused to watch any Christian

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programming, Jane told me, but that morning he heard I was to appear on "It's A New Day." I had ministered to him early in his Christian walk and had written him once in answer to a question, so he assented to Jane's suggestion to watch me.

Following the hour long telecast, with tears welling up in his eyes, Jim asked to be left undisturbed in their bedroom until "I've settled the matter with God." For more than an hour he had been in earnest prayer, trying to forgive those in the church who had wronged him, and trying to repent of his varied sins.

"Go on in the house, turn down the hallway, and go into our bedroom and pray with Jim," she coaxed.

I halted. "What if he doesn't want to see me? What if I hinder him from getting things right with God?"

"Don't be silly," Jane exhorted me, "why do you think God sent you? *I prayed that He would send you to my house at the close of the program this morning.* The whole time I've been standing out here I have been expecting to see you drive up!"

Now I knew why the Lord had ordered me to turn down the side street!

Jim looked at me like he had seen a ghost when he opened his bedroom door. "I prayed for a sign so I could know if the Lord would forgive me for all the rotten things I've done," he said, "Jane didn't call the television ministry, did she?"

"Not as far as I know, Jim. I was driving down the boulevard several blocks away when the Lord told me to turn down your street. I recognized your wife standing in your yard and waved. She signalled to me and after I parked she urged me to come on in your home. She's standing outside praying for you now. She loves you, Jim. The Lord loves you even more and has sent me here to

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assure you that He wants to fully restore you. I had no way of knowing you were here in the middle of the day. Furthermore, I had no way of knowing you're desperate for God. But Jesus knew your heart and I'm ready to pray for you in His Name!"

Since I knew his chief reason for turning from the Lord, I began to deal with him about unforgiveness and bitterness. It was hard for him to forgive the elders' mistaken judgment three years earlier, but the moment he forgave them and the others in their local church he was instantly released from his burden of sin and guilt. The power of God fell on him and sprawled Jim back across his bed. I knew he was in better hands than mine, so I turned and left the room.

I assured Jane she would soon have her "new husband" and told her to wait a little longer before going inside. She hugged me unashamedly and I remember thinking, "I hope the neighbors know Jim isn't at work today!" Then I opened their gate and walked to the car.

As I opened the door I heard another person's voice: "Wait, wait! Don't leave!"

I turned and saw two women coming up the sidewalk, one far ahead of the other. The first one had called to me and I noticed the second one was wearing arm braced crutches. "Don't leave, Father, I need healing," I heard her say.

I rushed over to them. They had seen the program that morning also. "Father, pray for me. I believe what you said this morning. I believe Jesus will heal me," the little lady told me.

"Dear sister," I explained to her, "I am not a Father or even a Reverend. I am only your brother in Christ. I can pray for you and Jesus will touch you, but you must look only to Him."

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"I will look only to the Lord Jesus," she promised me.

Jim was standing on the porch now, grinning from ear to ear with the joy of the Lord. "All of you come in here!" he ordered.

So back in the home I went with the two ladies (who had seen and recognized me in Jim and Jane's yard).

The Lord marvelously touched that dear little lady. I received a letter from her friend a couple of weeks later. She told me she had received a large measure of her healing (she had been diagnosed with MS) and no longer needed aid to walk. She had also received the Baptism with the Holy Spirit!

Jane wrote about a month later. Jim was back in church and serving the Lord with new joy and even greater liberty than he had known before he got bitter. *"And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new"* (Revelation 21:5).

I wonder how many lives are out there waiting for a miracle, praying, like Cornelius in Acts, for God to send someone to them to speak words of Life? I wonder how many believers are out there praying and listening for the Spirit to speak to them, like Peter in Acts, *"Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go...doubting nothing"* (10:20).

(P.S.—I did make it to the mall, but was so excited I couldn't bring myself to do any serious shopping. Dianne understood.)

2

If You Will Hear His Voice

"Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, Today if ye will hear His voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted Me and proved Me, and saw My works forty years" (Hebrews 3:7-9).

The writer to the Hebrews reminds them of a tragic event from their history. The forefathers of these believers had heard God's voice repeatedly during the forty years of the wilderness experience. Yet, when they heard they did not receive, but hardened their hearts.

The first time their fathers heard God's voice was at Sinai. Their response? "Please, God, don't speak to us again." How this must have grieved Him! It may surprise many modern day saints, but the fact is this: *most of us do not want to hear God speak directly to us, either, but would rather He speak to a man of God in our behalf!*

This statement sounds preposterous, but consider it in the light of God's Holy Word:

*"And God spake all these words, saying... (the Ten Commandments)...And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, **Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die**" (Exodus 20:1,18,19).*

"For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto

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*blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, **and the voice of words: which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them anymore**" (Hebrews 12:18).*

Israel offered this objection to hearing God's voice: "lest we die." Would it not be true to suggest that we are all somewhat unsure about hearing God? Are we not just a little uncertain? After all, what if the Lord tells us something that "kills" us? What if He tells us to lay down our plans for the future? Suppose He instructs us to reverse our present functions? Are we certain we are willing to hear from the Lord?

These questions must be answered honestly before we get on hearing terms with God. He understands this is one of the many by-products of the Fall. Our father Adam, in his guilt, admitted: *"I heard Thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid..."* (Genesis 3:10).

Several years ago I was privileged to attend a meeting where a New Testament prophet was ministering. As he spoke words of revelation concerning people's physical and temporal needs the crowds flocked to his meeting. One night, while under a heavy anointing, he began to reveal spiritual needs and sin problems in people's lives. At that point it became clear to the discerning saints that the supposed hunger to hear from God "lifted" from the majority. How could they discern such? The majority quickly left! The brother who was ministering remarked to me later, "It never fails. When the Lord gives me revelations of people's physical and material needs the people come running. When He gives me revelations of people's spiritual needs they leave running."

If you are going to hear God speak you must be willing to allow Him to say whatever He pleases. God will only speak as we desire to hear Him unconditionally. This is not at all hard to do if Jesus is truly Lord.

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My grandmother was a godly woman who wrote volumes of Christian books and many poems. The last thing Grandma said to me was, "David, never be afraid to let God deal with you. It may hurt. It may even be painful, but it will be good for you. **God will never take away anything you need and He will only give you what you really do need**, so yield everything to Him."

The next time I see her I want to be able to tell her I took her wise advice. But I'm sure she will know whether I did or not, before I have a chance to say.

In the early days of my traveling ministry I quoted Hebrews 3:7 often. At least I thought I was quoting it until a sister pointed out to me one evening that I had been misquoting it throughout the entire meeting! "It's only one word," she said, "but it changes the thought entirely."

She was right. I had been quoting the verse, *"Today, if ye hear His voice harden not your hearts..."*

The verse reads: "Today, if ye *will* hear His voice harden not your hearts..."

The way I presented the verse to the people totally misrepresented the writer's thought. Rather than saying "if ye hear" he said "if ye will hear."

God, I believe, is always speaking to us. We must have ears to hear "what the Spirit IS SAYING to the church" (not "what the Spirit WILL BE SAYING to the church").

He is speaking *now*. "TODAY if ye will hear..."

The original passage confirms this, also. Please note:

"Today if ye will hear His voice, Harden not your heart." (Psalm 95:7-8).

Hearing the "daily" voice of God requires willingness and willingness requires yieldedness.

It is sometimes easier to yield everything to God than it is at other times. Abraham found this to be true, but as

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he yielded all he heard, "...now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from Me" (Genesis 22:12).

That is why the text at the beginning of this chapter says, *"Today if ye will hear His voice..."* Now notice something. The text does not say, *"If you will hear His voice today"*, but rather, *"Today if you will hear His voice."*

Some Greek authorities tell us the inflection should be: *"Today, IF YOU WILL (DESIRE), hear His voice and harden not your hearts..."* The thought is that God is speaking today, and if you desire to do so, you may hear what He is saying!

The tender heart prays: "Lord, what do You want to say to me today?"

Most believers approach this subject on the grounds that hearing God's voice is something hard to do. "How can I hear God speak to me?" I am not infrequently asked. Whereas the Scripture implies "How can you not hear God speak to you if you are willing to hear Him?" It is a matter of motives, not methods. Focusing on methods, I have observed, leads to mysticism. Jesus said, "God is a Spirit" *not* "God is a spook." The Holy Spirit will not lead us into flakiness, although He will speak to us many things the natural mind will not understand (see Romans 8:8-14).

If you are willing to hear, you will hear. If you are not, it is most unlikely that you will hear God's voice in your daily situations.

The question is not, "Is God speaking?"

The question is, "Am I listening?"

Listening is determined by intimacy.

Steve Sampson was enjoying a precious prayer time one day. The Lord spoke to him so clearly and unmistakably about so many things that Steve was prompted to ask, "Lord, why don't you talk to me like this

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all the time?" The Lord answered, "Son, I am speaking to you all the time. You are not listening." My friend replied, "Then, Lord, why don't You turn up the volume so I can more easily hear You?" The answer floored him: "Because lovers do not yell in each other's ear."

James says if we draw near to God, He will draw near to us (see James 4:6-10).

Elijah had to do this in a geographical sense. He had a divine rendezvous scheduled on Mount Horeb (see 1 Kings 19). It was a forty day journey, for which God supernaturally strengthened him, but it was a journey nonetheless.

When he arrived at Horeb he was greeted by lightning, wind, and an earthquake. None of this bothered him as he knew God didn't speak to him that way.

Suddenly God did speak in the old familiar way Elijah knew...in His still, small voice. And Elijah responded in the old familiar way the Lord knew...hiding his face in his garment. The Lord will speak to the one who *"trembles at His word"* (Isaiah 66:5).

The point I am trying to make is that we must unconditionally surrender our whole being to God's will or we will never know His voice. The Pharisees were very religious, yet Jesus said, *"Ye have neither heard His voice at any time"* (John 5:37). Later some said it had only thundered when the Father spoke from heaven. Others mistook God's voice for that of an angel (see John 12:28-30). They were unwilling to hear so they didn't. They had ears, but they did not hear. They had eyes, but they did not see.

Is it any different today? We must be willing to hear if we want the Heavenly Father to speak. He said, *"Hear, O My people, and I will speak"* (Psalm 50:7).

Let us humble our hearts like a small child before Him

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and say,

"Speak, LORD; for Thy servant heareth" (1 Samuel 3:9).

One evening as I was driving to Chicago the Lord began to deal with me about listening to his *daily* voice. I had been so busy I had cut back on prayer time. I knew I was hearing God tell me to begin hearing Him on that personal, one-to-one basis, again. I had been through a dry period and I knew it was the result of my own *"dullness of hearing"* (Hebrews 5:11).

"OK, Lord, I'll spend several hours a day in prayer on this trip and devote myself to You, rather than to Your work, as much as possible."

Any preacher who has just read this will understand what I mean. It is easy to get so busy serving the Lord (like Martha) that there is no time left to sit at His feet (like Mary). A common saying in the preaching ministry goes: "I'm so busy in the work of the Lord that I have no time for the Lord of the work." This had been true of me for the past couple of months.

As soon as I made this commitment the presence of the Lord suddenly filled the van. I was aware of Jesus in a special way and we enjoyed each other's company for over an hour. Then He abruptly said, "Take this exit."

Although I was several hours behind schedule I offered no resistance and pulled off the interstate highway. My spirit (by the Holy Spirit in me) flashed an image of a fast food restaurant chain across the screen of my mind. I immediately knew I would find such a restaurant down the road, to the right. A minute or two later I was there.

I was not hungry in the least bit, so I ordered only a cup of coffee and a cup of soup. "Lord, what do you want me to do here?" I asked.

A moment later I surmised the Lord's reason for

bringing me there. Two ladies, seated by themselves, were talking to a gentleman, who was seated a few tables away. The subject: TV preachers. Each table had their favorite television minister and was trying trying to convince the person(s) seated at the other table why his/her minister was far superior.

I was disgusted. First Corinthians 3:1-9 and other passages came to mind. I noticed there were people sitting at other tables who were watching the Christians hack it out with each other, to their obvious joy. I felt like rebuking both sides for the carnality and wondered what the television preachers would think if they were tuned in to this little episode!

Suddenly my irritation melted. I was lifted up into a higher realm and saw things so much differently! I saw three little children, enthused and excited over a "prized" rock each had discovered in a sandbox. The two little girls told the little boy, "My rock is prettier than yours." "No," he insisted, "mine is lovelier than yours." I giggled at their harmless childishness thinking that children will be children.

The next thing I knew I was back in the restaurant and the "boy" said, "Do you know what turns me off about Brother _____? It's the way he begs for money. On the other hand Reverend _____ gives a very mild appeal. He doesn't offend unbelievers who watch him."

The two "girls" responded, "Of course he doesn't offend unbelievers. He never tells them to repent of their sins, and we heard he doesn't even believe in a literal hell, etc."

"Well, at least he doesn't cry for money and then hop in his limousine and forget all about it while dear little ladies like yourselves scrape your hard earned dollars together to get him out of his latest crisis while he lives the high life back at his mansion. He never gives it a second thought."

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I noticed many of the other customers nodding in agreement with his statement and because I have had some dealings with this particular preacher I joined in the conversation.

"Pardon me," I interjected, "but I know for a fact that Brother _____ does carry the burden of a financial crisis around the clock."

"How do *you* know?" he challenged.

"Because I've talked with him at 9 a.m. when he had dark circles under his eyes for lack of sleep. He explained his weariness saying he had slept only one or two hours all night due to the pressing financial needs. It rang true. I'm not saying I agree with his fund raising methods, but I know him to be sincere when he makes a strong appeal."

(I felt I had to make this statement because the honor of the Gospel depended on it in the presence of so many witnesses. I was not trying to make a show.)

I turned to leave the restaurant and noticed the two ladies staring at me in awe. "Do you know Brother _____?"

"Not well, but I have met and talked with him after he had written me several times over various points in my books."

"So you are a preacher, too?"

"Yes, and I'm on my way to Chicago now for some meetings. God bless you and pray for me."

"Wait! Do you have the baptism with the Holy Spirit?"

Brother _____ has been preaching about the Holy Ghost and we want to receive Him. We followed his prayer at the end of the program but nothing happened."

To save space I will have to summarize what followed. The two ladies, both natural sisters who were widowed and divorced, asked me to come to their home and pray for

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them. I did. The presence of the Lord filled their living room. The younger lady was not really saved. She repented and believed. Then she received the Holy Ghost. Her sister received a glorious baptism in the Spirit, too. The tears and laughter flowed freely. Jesus was in our midst.

My trip was delayed almost two hours, but the remaining time passed like minutes as the Lord ministered to me in the van, thanking me for obeying His voice and for keeping a divine appointment He had scheduled in a fast food restaurant.

"Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth"

3

Hearing Aids

"Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live..." (Isaiah 55:3).

We have studied what the Word of God teaches about hearing God's voice in the two previous lessons. We have seen that hearing God's voice is not to be thought of as out of the ordinary, but rather the norm, in our daily walk.

Furthermore, the Scripture repeatedly tells us to hear His voice more than it says how. A favorite phrase of the Old Testament is "hearken unto Me." It is implied His people are able to do so if they are so inclined. Few specifics are offered, yet there are some definite "hearing aids" given in Scripture which will enlighten us on how to *"diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD (our) God"* (Exodus 15:26).

Before we discuss these important aids let's make one thing clear at the outset:

*God's Word majors on **principles** rather than **formulas**.*

It is the pattern of recent decades, indeed throughout church history, that immature believers search for ways to box God in to some particular method. It seems we desire to force God's hand, as it were, into a set course. There are always some ministers whose delight is catering to this weakness, as it is both popular and profitable. Paul commented that many preachers in his day preached Christ out of wrong motives (see Philippians 1:15-17; 2:21). Sooner or later however, the A,B,C's of any given formula fail when put to the fire. Why?

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The answer can be simply put: BECAUSE GOD IS GOD. Our Father knows when we are less than sincere (see Psalm 66:18). He wants us to be totally dependent UPON HIM rather than a formula, no matter how scriptural it may be.

It was unquestionably divine inspiration that moved Peter to give the so-called "formula" of Repentance, Water Baptism, and Holy Ghost Baptism on the day of Pentecost (see Acts 2:38). This was a pattern that worked for years, as in Acts 8:1-18, until the Lord decided, according to His sovereign will, to mix things up a little at the household of Cornelius! Can you imagine Peter's quizzical expression when he said to the Jewish believers who had accompanied him to the Gentile gathering: *"Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?"* (Acts 10:47). Indeed, those he asked must have had the same bewilderment on their countenances because Luke informs us they "were astonished" because the Holy Spirit had fallen on the Gentiles (v. 45). It was not only that Gentiles had received the Holy Spirit, which Peter himself prophesied would happen ten years earlier (Acts 2:39), but that He fell on them before Peter had given them a chance to repent and be baptized!

*"Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God? how unsearchable are His judgments, **and His ways past finding out!**"*
(Romans 11:33).

Having made this clear, however, let me be quick to affirm there are definite, specific principles, outlined in God's Word, which we are wise to incorporate into our daily walk.

I have discovered several "hearing aids" which will help those who desire to consistently hear God's voice and follow His will.

PRINCIPLE ONE: You Must Have An Ear

Obviously we must first have "an ear" with which to hear. Not everyone has the type of ear the Lord so often refers to in the Revelation. Notice how the often repeated admonition begins: "HE THAT HATH AN EAR, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

The natural ear is the God given sensory organ for detecting sound. If it is functioning properly one does not learn how to use it, inasmuch as we are born hearing. Listening, on the other hand, is quite another thing. Many people go through their entire lives hearing, but not listening. Hearing is a natural function; listening is an acquired art.

Before we can listen to someone we must be able to hear them. We usually take our natural hearing devices for granted, until something like hearing loss affects us in later years, but all hearing begins with the ear.

Now please notice the admonition of Jesus to His church: "*He that hath an ear...*"

Had Christ meant the natural ear this phrase would be nonsensical. Since this particular ear is to "hear what the Spirit saith" it must refer to *a spiritual faculty of perception*. Only those who have been made anew in the spiritual realm have spiritual faculties of perception which are tuned into God. Indeed we have a mouth that can "taste" and eyes that can "see that the Lord is good." These eyes can be "anointed with eyesalve that (we) may see" and "enlightened to know what is the hope of His calling" (see Psalm 34:8; Revelation 3:18; Ephesians 1:18).

A mark of maturity is diligently exercising the spiritual faculties of perception in order to be able to separate between good and evil. (This statement is paraphrased from the Greek text of Hebrews 5:14.)

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As we exercise ourselves unto godliness (1 Timothy 4:7) we grow spiritually and our spiritual senses are quickened and operative. By prayer and daily meditation of God's Word we are "priming the pump", so to speak, of our inner ear. Failure to do so inevitably results in our becoming "dull of hearing" (Hebrews 5:11).

Our Example was awakened "morning by morning" in His inner ear. He received instructions for the day's ministry activities and specific words of knowledge and wisdom for the weary ones He would meet that day. He said His Father *"opened mine ear and I was not rebellious neither turned away back"* (see Isaiah 50:4-6).

The spiritual senses of the unregenerate are darkened and deadened. "He that hath an ear" is he who is "the handiwork of God in Christ Jesus" having been "saved by grace" (Ephesians 2:10,8). It is certain that the born again believer has "an ear to hear" the voice of God. It is less certain that he is willing to use it.

PRINCIPLE TWO: Be Willing To Hear

"He that hath an ear, LET HIM HEAR what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

Not all who have a spiritual ear are willing to use it. Did I say "not all" are willing to hear? It is my observation after 15 years of continuous travel ministry that **MOST OF GOD'S CHILDREN DO NOT WANT TO HEAR GOD'S DAILY VOICE!**

This is not exaggeration.

I am told by different men of God who travel abroad that spiritual laziness is not restricted to North America. From the mail I regularly receive from many countries I discern an intense hunger for God's Word, but I do not doubt the testimony of those who are well traveled

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overseas. It must be the spirit of this age that influences us to remain in spiritual undiscipline. There are encouraging signs this is changing, praise God, and the fact you are studying this message is a proof such is the case with yourself. God is stirring you to be more than you are. He is creating a desire in you to will and to do His good pleasure. He is causing a new hunger which He alone can satisfy! HALLELUJAH!!

The Lord is nudging us on the inside to no longer "walk as men" (1 Corinthians 3:3). We are no longer "common" since God has cleansed us (see Acts 10:15,28). We need to release the "rivers of living water" to flow out to those around us (see John 7:38-39; 1 Corinthians 12:7).

We must hear our Master's voice if we are to do the above. We must be willing to hear if we are to hear. Our main obstacle to this needed willingness is self-will. Notice why Jesus was able to hear:

*"I can of Mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and My judgment is just; **because I seek not Mine own will**, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me" (John 5:30).*

Did you catch a possible phrase from His declaration? *"I hear...because I seek not Mine own will..."*

One person who was miraculously used of God often instructed the saints to "wait before the Lord until there are no longer two wills involved in any matter you are seeking Him about. The will that remains is the will of the Father."

Self-will is subtle, religious, and somewhat honest. It is based on natural reasoning, however, and this is its dead giveaway. God will often instruct us to do things contrary to our own will. We must die daily to our own desires and yield to the work of the cross in our soul. This is especially true of preachers. Paul says "bishops" (overseers) must not

be "self-willed" (Titus 1:7). Contrary to this admonition there is a lot of self-will in the ministry today. In fact, there is little of the attitude of Him who said, "I seek not Mine own will."

A chief reason we are not willing to hear is we are afraid God may tell us something that cuts across the grain. I'm learning to say, "Ouch, Hallelujah!" It is exciting! But Mr. Self always wants to have his way and I must have his funeral before breakfast if God is to have His way each day. "I die daily" was Paul's experience and is my aspiration. Death to self brings such freedom from love of men's approval! It leads to "newness of life" in the everyday walk. The Lord is high and lifted up and His train fills the temple!

PRINCIPLE THREE: Total Dependence on the Lord

There is a purpose behind "I seek not my own will" and that purpose is "I seek the will of Him that sent me." When we are set free from self-will we are suddenly very inclined to the Father's will. This produces complete dependence upon Another than ourselves.

Once again we go to our Pattern and see that He often affirmed this principle of total dependence upon the Father.

*"Verily, verily, I say unto you. **The Son can do nothing of Himself**, but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise" (John 5:19).*

"I can of Mine own self do nothing..." (John 5:30).

"...the words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself: but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works" (John 14:10).

Can you picture a Saviour who is the Lord of glory and yet totally helpless? If so, you are seeing Him correctly! He who spoke the worlds into existence emptied Himself of His divine rights and attributes when He took on the form of a servant. He said, *"I can of Mine own self do nothing"* and He meant it. In fact He preceded a similar statement with "Verily, verily" (John 5:19). As most commentators point out Jesus used "verily" (truly) to place a special emphasis on any statement He was about to make. In the few cases where He used a double "verily" He was giving the statement His utmost earnestness in communicating fundamental truths. He only used the double verily in a few places, like John 3:3,5, for example:

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God... Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

In this same sense of special emphasis He said, *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of Himself ..."* Do you believe His statement? Most likely you do not! (Perhaps this is too hard, but I seriously doubt if most Christians truly believe our Lord Jesus was totally helpless in Himself to do anything.)

Why did Jesus emphasize His unique helplessness with a double verily? Perhaps He was making this point to His present and future followers: *If I can do NOTHING on My own initiative or ability, but am totally dependent upon the Father, how much more are you with all of your presumed abilities less than nothing!*

This same sense of helplessness and total dependence must be ours if we are to do the works of Him that sent us. We must believe Jesus when He said, *"without Me ye can do nothing"* (John 15:5). Indeed, there is no thing we can do without Christ. By comparison we can do everything

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through Him! But then "it is no longer I, but Christ" who accomplishes every good thing through us.

Notice the following parallels:

Jesus could do nothing without the Father. We can do nothing without Jesus.

"...for without Me (Jesus) ye (believers) can do nothing" (John 15:5).

"I can do all things THROUGH CHRIST which strengthened me" (Philippians 4:13).

Jesus was sent by the Father. We are sent by Jesus.

"...as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you" (John 20:21).

Jesus came to do the Father's will. We are sent to do Jesus' will.

"For I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me " (John 6:38).

"Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6).

Jesus heard the Father's voice. We hear Jesus' voice.

"And the Father Himself, which hath sent Me, hath borne witness of Me. Ye have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His shape" (John 5:37).

"...as I hear, I judge: and My judgment is just..." (John 5:30).

"My sheep hear My voice..." (John 10:27).

"...if any man open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20).

In the above parallels I am not trying to say the Father and the Son are different. They are One. I am simply drawing the distinction to show that the pattern Jesus established is to be followed precisely by His disciples. (We are to function in the same manner He in which He operated.)

A Few Specifics

Having underlined the above principles we can proceed to a few specifics about hearing God's voice. These methods must be viewed as means to an end. Our motives must be pure, or they simply will not work.

1. Withdraw from busyness and distraction.

I am tempted to sermonize on Mary and Martha here, but you'll get the point without that.

"Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10).

"...in quietness and confidence shall be your strength... And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left" (Isaiah 30:15, 21).

2. Pray, praise, and worship the Lord.

If you give Him your voice, He will give you His voice.

"Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God: for unto Thee will I pray. My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up" (Psalm 5:2-3).

In this atmosphere of praise and worship, as you cry, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts" you will also hear "the voice of the LORD" (see Isaiah 6:1-8).

3. Devotionally meditate on a few verses of

Scripture.

The beautiful thing about the Scripture is this: he who gathers much does not have too much and he who gathers little has no lack (see Exodus 16:17-18). A person may read a hundred chapters in a day and wake up hungry for more of the Word the next morning. Or he may spend hours slowly meditating on a small portion of Scripture as the Holy Spirit reveals it to him, teaching him all things, and have no lack of nourishment and strength from a small meal on the Word of God (if chewed thoroughly). Most Christians are not exercised in the art of meditation of God's Word. Take your time with a verse or two praying over it, musing over it. Let the Spirit quicken it to your heart and you will find a *practical application* in which God's voice will be heard.

4. The moment you become aware of God's presence be absolutely still. He will speak in the still, small voice and you will be strengthened in His will.

This is the hardest of all! Here is the place we must get to, and once there, must remain until we hear His voice. Up to this point we have been "doing", now we must simply wait upon the Lord "being" in His presence. A devout man of God was interrupted by an aide as soon as he finished vocal prayer. He told his attendant, "Couldn't you see I was listening to God?" "No," his young aide said, "I thought you were through praying because you grew quiet." "How wrong you are, dear brother," the old minister said, "because the quiet part is the most important part of my prayer time."

Wouldn't we all agree that our Father knows what things we have need of before we ask Him and that before we even call He will often answer? How important it is, then, to develop a listening ear!

Dad sometimes reprimanded me as a child that God had

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given me two ears and one mouth so that I could do twice as much listening as speaking.

"Let every man be swift to hear" and "slow to speak" when sensing the wonderful presence of God! Indeed, slow to speak until He inspires what more we should say, until we are conversing back and forth, as friend unto friend. Jesus wants to "sup" with each of us! The Greek work in Revelation 3:21 is where the word "dine" originates and refers to a long and leisurely meal in which intimacy and close communion are shared between two friends! HALLELUJAH! Jesus wants to spend time with you. In so doing you will hear His voice.

(As we become more mature in the Lord we will discover, to our great joy, that the Lord will speak to us as we go throughout our daily routine with greater frequency and clarity. Until we get to that point, however, we will have to diligently exercise ourselves unto godliness as noted above.)

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Although raised in a Christian home, David Alsobrook turned from the Lord at an early age and went into karate, yoga, transcendental meditation, and drugs. He was gloriously saved in 1969 and filled with the Holy Spirit in 1970. In February 1972, David Alsobrook answered the call of God to go into an evangelistic and teaching ministry. He has written 25 books, of which almost three million copies have gone out from his ministry. He and his wife, Dianne, have two daughters, Ashley and Kimberly. They reside in Indianapolis, Indiana.



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