

God's Unvarying Requirement



Hearing God's Voice (Part 1)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again at the beginning of a new week, sharing with you Keys to Successful Living which God has placed in my hand through many years of personal experience and Christian ministry.

My theme for this week is Hearing God's Voice. I believe you'll find it exciting and inspiring.

But first, let me say thank you to those of you who've been writing to me. Before I finish this talk, we'll be giving you a mailing address to which you may write. It means a great deal to me to hear how this radio ministry of mine has been helping you and blessing you. So please take time to write, even if it's only a brief note.

Now back to our theme: Hearing God's Voice.

The Bible reveals that God has dealt with the human race in different ways, in different periods of human history. God's different ways of dealing with the human race, in different periods, theologically, the title for that is "dispensations." So what I'm saying is, over the recorded history of the human race, in the Bible, we find various different dispensations. That is, different periods in which God dealt in a specific way with the human race. Then later, in some respects, He changed His way of dealing. We would call that changing from one dispensation to another. That's the technical theological word. Now I'm saying this because I want to point out certain facts about the dispensations, ways in which they differ, and then one important way in which they do not differ.

Let's take three main dispensations that are generally recognized in the Bible. The first is the dispensation of the patriarchs. That means the fathers of families, of people like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, even before them, people like Enoch and Noah. In that period, in that dispensation, God dealt primarily with individuals and with their families and they related directly to God.

Then there came the dispensation which is often called the dispensation of the law, when God began to deal with Israel specifically as a collective nation, and He put them under a special law which was special for Israel and a law that did not

apply entirely to other nations. And during this period, this dispensation, for most of the time, Israel had a temple and a priesthood. So the outstanding features of that dispensation were the law, the temple, and the priesthood.

And then there came, what we usually call, the dispensation of the Gospel, which is really a proclamation to the whole human race irrespective of their race or their nationality. And this proclamation of the gospel requires from each person an individual response.

So you see, we can discern three major dispensations; the patriarchs, Israel under the law, and then the dispensation of the Gospel in which we are still living today. And, as I've already said, God's requirements in these different dispensations were somewhat different. However, in the midst of all the differences, there remained one unvarying requirement, one thing that God always required. I wonder if you know what that was. I wonder if you can guess what I have in mind. I believe it's very, very important that we see this. I believe the one unvarying requirement which never changed from dispensation to dispensation was the requirement to hear God's voice. I believe that was what always marked out those who belonged to God and made them different from all other people. It was that they had learned to hear God's voice.

I'd like to give you now some examples from the Pentateuch, from the first five Books of Moses, all of which show the unique importance of hearing God's voice.

The first is found in Exodus 15, verse 26. Israel had come to a stage in their journey through the wilderness where they were very thirsty. There was a pool of water there called Marah, but when they wanted to drink the water they couldn't because it was bitter. And Moses prayed to the Lord. The Lord showed him a certain tree. When he cast the tree into the water, the waters were healed and the people could drink. And, in the context of this, the Lord said this to Moses:

> "If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that healeth thee." (KJV)

What is the primary requirement? "If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God." The Hebrew says, "If you will listen, listening." I interpret that to mean that we have to listen to God's voice with both our ears, the right and the left; that is to listen, listening. God said to Israel, "If you'll do that, you'll never be sick. I'll keep you healthy. I'll be your doctor. I'll accept responsibility for your physical well-being."

Now there was a time in my life when I was sick in hospital and doctors couldn't heal, me and at that time I had to seek God for how I could receive healing from Him. And as I studied the Scriptures in that context, I discovered that almost every place where God speaks about being healed, the emphasis is on what we listen to, just as it is here. "If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, I will put none of these diseases upon thee." I believe that's true today. I believe that those of us who learn to listen to God with both ears, to listen to God's voice and obey Him, can lead a life that's free from sickness and many other plagues and problems.

And then, a little further on in the Book of Exodus, in Exodus 19, when Israel came to the foot of Mount Sinai, Moses went up and the Lord spoke to him and gave him a message to the children of Israel, and this is what the Lord told Moses to tell Israel. Exodus 19:3 through 6:

> "Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagle's wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation." (KJV)

Notice again, the primary emphasis, the first condition, "If ye will obey my voice, then my will will be worked out for you; you'll be a unique people, different from all other people, living on a higher level, living in an area of provision and blessing unknown to other people, but the primary requirement is, if ye will obey my voice."

I'd like to point out just three phases of God's dealings with Israel as revealed in that passage. First of all, God says that He brought Israel to Himself. That's the primary purpose of redemption always, to come to God, personally. Secondly, God said, "I want you to obey my voice." That's what leads us into the provisions of God. Thirdly, He said, "If you'll keep my covenant." God's covenant is the way He settles and finalizes His relationship with the people. And fourthly, He said, "You'll be a kingdom of priests." You'll be a unique people, blessed above all other peoples, distinct from all other peoples. And that's the order; brought to God, obeying His voice, keeping his covenant, and so becoming a kingdom of priests.

Now I want to move on to the fifth book of the Pentateuch, the Book of Deuteronomy, and I want to read a few verses from the 28th chapter of Deuteronomy. These words were spoken by Moses to Israel just before they entered their inheritance in the land of Canaan. They were a kind of recapitulation of God's requirements. And again, one of the things that's most strongly emphasized is hearing God's voice. This chapter sets forth two different things that could come up on Israel. The first are the blessings for obedience; the second are the curses for disobedience. And in each case, whether it's to be a blessing or whether it's to be a curse, it's determined by whether they do or do not hear God's voice. Listen to the first two verses.

> "And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God." (KJV)

Notice it begins and ends with listening diligently to the voice of the Lord. And the result of listening diligently to God's voice is "all these blessings shall come on thee and overtake thee."

Now let's look at the opposite side of the picture. A little further on in the same chapter, chapter 28, verse 15:

> "But is shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee." (KJV)

Isn't that very clear. How foolish if we neglect. If we hearken diligently to the voice of the Lord, all these blessings. But if we do not hearken to the voice of the Lord, all these curses. See, that is the continuing requirement of God from His people in all ages, all dispensations. Basically, it's very simple. "If you want to be my people, if you want to enjoy my blessings, hearken diligently to my voice. Listen with both of your ears to my voice. But if you fail to listen, if you will not listen to me, then it will not be blessings, but it will be curses, particularly in the matter of healing. If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, I am the Lord that healeth thee." But also, beyond healing, to all other provisions and blessings of God, the key is, "If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God."

Well, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll be explaining how this principle of hearing God's voice applies also in the New Testament.

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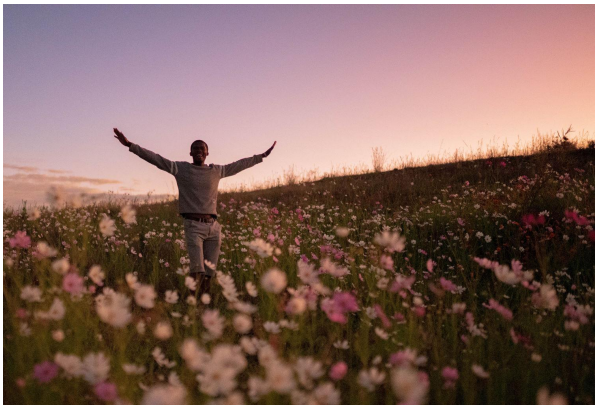

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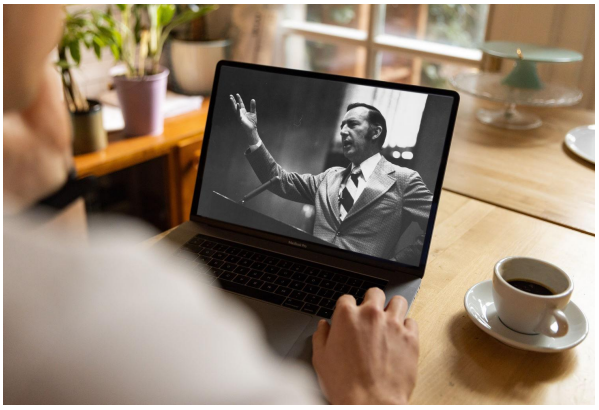

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