

The Mark of Christ's Sheep



Hearing God's Voice (Part 2)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, sharing with you precious truths out of Scripture that have made the difference between success and failure in my life, and can do the same in yours.

Today, I'm continuing with the exciting theme of Hearing God's Voice.

In my introductory talk yesterday I explained that God has dealt with mankind in different ways at different periods of history. In theological language, we call these different periods of God's dealings with mankind Dispensations.

I gave some brief examples, the dispensation of the patriarchs, when man dealt with men and individuals in a personal relationship. Then, the dispensation when God put Israel under the law and dealt with them through the law and they had a temple and a priesthood. And thirdly, the dispensation in which we are now living today, the dispensation of the gospel, a universal proclamation of God to all mankind which requires an individual response from each one who hears it.

However, I also pointed out that in the midst of all these differences, there was one unvarying requirement and that was: to hear God's voice.

In this connection, I shared with you some very powerful Scriptures from the Old Testament which I just want to quote again briefly, because they have such a tremendous impact when they're put together.

The first was in Exodus 15:26:

> "The Lord said, 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)

If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, the guarantee is complete continuing health. The Lord becomes your personal physician.

And then, the words that the Lord spoke to Israel from Mount Sinai when He brought them there to make a covenant with Him. Exodus 19:5 and 6:

> "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."

God wanted to make a covenant with Israel to bring them into a special relationship, to make them a special kind of people, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation. But the condition was, "If ye will obey my voice."

And then, just before Israel entered the Promised Land, in the Book of Deuteronomy, chapter 28, Moses reminded them of God's requirements and of the results that would follow if they kept God's requirements, also of the results that would follow if they did not. Deuteronomy 28, 1 and 2:

> "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 to the voice of the Lord, and the result is, "All these blessings shall come on thee and overtake thee." But then the opposite side is presented in Deuteronomy 28:15:

> "But it 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)

Not listening to the voice of the Lord brings upon us all the curses. See there's the dividing line, the watershed between the blessings and the curses. All the blessings are for those who hearken diligently to the Lord's voice. But just the same, all the curses are for those who do not hearken to the Lord's voice.

Now later on, through the prophets, God reminded Israel of this primary requirement which He had first laid upon them through Moses, and it's summed up very briefly, succinctly, and vividly in the Prophet Jeremiah, chapter 7, verses 22 and 23 where God is reprimanding Israel for not understanding what He required of them, and not obeying Him. And He says this:

> "For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: [God says, 'You're so busy with your burnt offerings and sacrifices, but that wasn't the primary thing that I required of you; there was something more primary than that.' And then He goes on:] But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people." (KJV)

I believe that sums it up as simply and as clearly as it ever can be stated. "Obey my voice and I will be your God." That's the unvarying requirement of God from age to age and dispensation to dispensation. Many things may change but this remains unchanged. "Obey my voice and I will be your God."

But alas, Israel did not do what God required. And so, Jeremiah goes on in chapter 7, verse 24, the next verse:

> "But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the councils and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward." (KJV)

What was Israel's great problem? We can put our finger on many outward manifestations of the problem but the inward essence of the problem is stated there, "They hearkened not, nor inclined their ear." Notice it's all to do with what they listened to. They didn't listen. They didn't bow down their ear. They didn't hear the voice of the Lord their God. They didn't receive what God had for them; they missed the whole of God's purpose and plan.

You remember God said in Exodus 19, "If you will obey my voice, then you'll be a peculiar treasure; you'll be a kingdom of priests, a holy nation; the one essential requirement is that you hear and obey my voice." "Obey my voice and I will be your God." I want to say that with the greatest emphasis to you today. If you really want to belong to the Lord, to walk in His ways, to enjoy His blessings, that's what He's saying to you just as He did to Israel. "Obey my voice and I will be your

God."

Now we'll move on to the teaching of Jesus in the New Testament and I want you to see that in this vital, essential respect of hearing the voice of the Lord, nothing is changed. Other things have changed but this essential requirement remains unchanged. Listen to some verses from the tenth chapter of John's Gospel, where Jesus presents Himself to His people as the Good Shepherd. This is what He says about the relationship between the shepherd and his sheep, that is between the Lord and those who are His people. John 10, verse 3 through 5:

> "To him [that's the shepherd] the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out. [What's the mark of the sheep of Jesus? They hear the Shepherd's voice. And the next verse:] When he puts forth all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. [What's the great basis of our relationship with the Lord Jesus? We follow Him. Why? Because we know His voice. And the next verse:] And a stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers." (NASB)

Everything turns around hearing and knowing the voice of the Lord. His sheep, His people hear His voice, recognize it, and follow Him. They will not follow deceivers. They will not follow false prophets and false teachers because it's not the voice of the Lord. They know the voice of the Lord; they're not deceived by false teachers.

And then in John 10:16, a little further on, Jesus had been talking up til now about those who believe in Him among the people of Israel. But now He goes on to people from other nations and He says:

> "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; [not of the Jewish fold] I must bring them also, and they shall hear my voice; and they shall become one flock with one shepherd." (NASB)

Again, what is it that's going to draw believers to Jesus from amongst all Gentile nations? How is it they come to Him? It says, "They shall hear my voice." That's the distinctive mark of those who come to Jesus. And I think it's interesting in this context, that it says, "They shall become one flock, with one shepherd." What's the way to Christian unity? I don't believe it's organization. I don't believe it's doctrinal or theological discussion primarily; I believe it comes as we all learn to hear the voice of the Lord. "They shall hear my voice," Jesus says, "And they shall become one flock with one shepherd." How? Through hearing the Lord's voice.

And then, it's all summed up in John 10:27. Jesus is speaking again. He says this:

> "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow me." (NASB)

There are three things that mark out the true followers of the Lord, His disciples, His people. First, they hear His voice. Second, He knows them; He recognizes them; He acknowledges them. Thirdly, they follow Him. You see, it's not a question of denominational labels. Jesus isn't talking in terms of Catholics, or Protestants, or Baptists, or Methodists, or Presbyterians, or Pentecostals. He's not saying, "My people come from any particular denomination or group," but He's saying, "The distinctive mark of my people, that which singles them out from all other people, that which makes them different and makes them mine, is they hear my voice; I know them, they follow Me." And we realize, of course, that in Bible times, in Bible lands, a shepherd did not drive his sheep, he led them, and he led them by the sound of his voice. They didn't follow him by watching him, primarily, they followed him by listening to him, and they always went where they heard the shepherd's voice.

So you see, in actual fact, if you apply that analogy, and it's a totally scriptural analogy, it is impossible to follow the Lord unless you hear His voice. It must be through hearing His voice.

Let me say this in love, and I must close. Jesus did not say, "My sheep read the Bible." I believe it's essential to read the Bible, but it's not sufficient because many people read the Bible but don't hear the voice of the Lord. It's not reading the Bible that enables us to follow Him; it's hearing His voice. "My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me."

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll be explaining three distinctive features of hearing God's voice.

Radio Program

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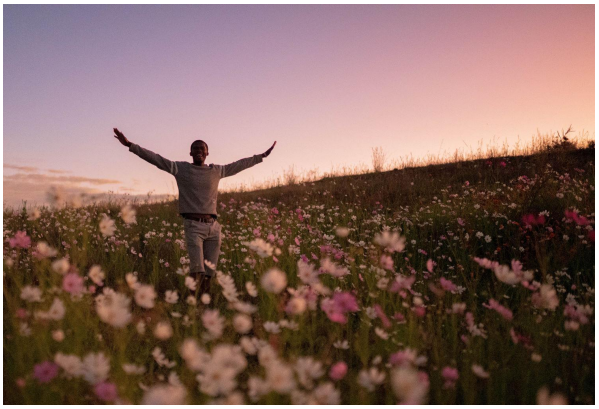

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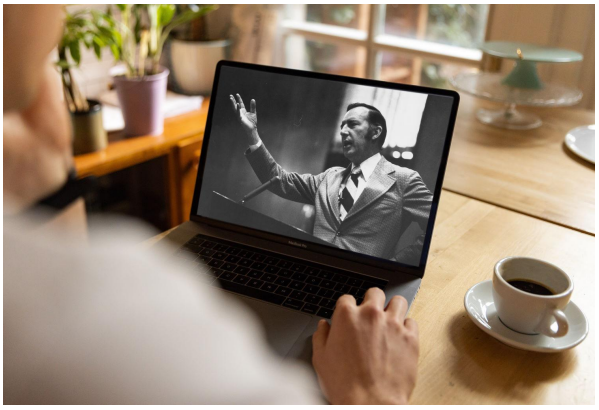

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