

Three Distinctive Features



Hearing God's Voice (Part 3)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, as we continue to study together our exciting theme for this week: Hearing God's Voice.

In my previous talks this week I've explained that the great, unchanging, basic requirement for an ongoing relationship with God is to hear God's voice. In other respects, God's way of relating to mankind changed with the change of dispensations, but this one requirement of hearing God's voice continues unchanged throughout all dispensations.

I pointed out in my talk yesterday that this requirement is very succinctly summed up in the Prophet Jeremiah, chapter 7, verse 23, where God says through Jeremiah to His people Israel:

> "Obey my voice, and I will be your God." (KJV)

I believe that says it. That states it. That's what God requires of His people in all ages, all dispensations, from different cultures, different backgrounds. Many things may change, but this one thing never changes. God says, "You want me to be your God; obey my voice; obey my voice and I will be your God."

Many Christians don't realize that the basic requirement of the New Testament is just the same. It hasn't changed. In John, chapter 10, verse 27, Jesus says:

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

What marks out the true followers of Jesus? It's not a denominational label; it's not a certain form of worship; it's not adherence to some particular doctrine; it's hearing His voice. "My sheep, the ones that belong to me, hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." Those three things go together. It begins with our hearing the voice of Jesus. When we hear His voice, He knows us; He recognizes us; He takes note of us; He acknowledges that we are His, and then we follow Him. I pointed out yesterday that according to the pattern of a shepherd and his sheep in Bible lands, sheep

followed the shepherd. The shepherd didn't drive them. The sheep followed the shepherd and they followed because they heard his voice. If they didn't hear his voice, they couldn't follow. And I believe that's just as true in the relationship between Jesus and us. If we don't hear His voice, we can't follow Him. We have to hear His voice before we can follow Him. That's what makes us His sheep. His sheep hear His voice. He knows them. They follow Him.

Now today I'm going to point out three distinctive features of hearing God's voice, three features which are significantly different from much of what is traditionally accepted as normal religious conduct or activity.

This message of mine, in many ways, is very revolutionary. It sounds simple but when you really take it to your heart and begin to apply it, you'll find that it will change a whole lot of things that you're doing in your life. It will change your standards. It will change your values. It will very probably change the way you live. The three features of hearing God's voice, that I want to point out, are these. I'll state them, then I'll comment briefly on each one of them.

Firstly, hearing God's voice is personal.

Secondly, hearing God's voice is intangible.

And thirdly, hearing God's voice is present in the sense of time. It's not past. It's not future. It's always present.

Just grasp those three features. It's personal; it's intangible, and it's present in time.

Now let's think a little bit about what that indicates. First of all, hearing God's voice is very personal. Every voice is individual and unique. No two voices are exactly alike. Voices are one of the most individual features of human personality. That's why Jesus said about His sheep, "They won't follow a stranger because a stranger's voice is different." You see, our protection is hearing the Lord's voice, relating to Him individually, personally, not just relating to a historical figure, not just relating to some movement or some doctrine, but relating to the Lord Himself through His voice.

I heard a rather remarkable statement made. I have never really checked on it, but I hear that there is a way of designing a safe, perhaps for use in a bank, in which the thing that opens the safe, that triggers the combination, is a certain voice, maybe the voice of the bank president or the bank manager, and no other voice can cause that safe to open. That just shows us how absolutely distinctive and individual a person's voice is. There's a voice that can open that safe that will not open to any other voice. And you know to me, that's a parable because I think that's what the heart of the believer should be like. I think our heart should be like a safe, something that treasures the most valuable things we have. And I think that there should be only one voice that opens up that safe, the voice of the Lord Himself. We come into terrible grief and problems if we open the safe door of our heart to the wrong person. That's what causes most of the tragedies and problems in the world today is people open their hearts to the wrong person. Think of your heart from now on as a safe with a combination in the door, and that combination will respond only to one voice, the voice of the Lord. You know, when you open up to the Lord, you'll never be harmed, you'll never be deceived, you'll never be disappointed. But many of you have learned from experience, if you open the door to the wrong person, if you respond to the wrong voice, many harmful troubles and problems can result. You see, that's the shepherd/sheep relationship. David said in Psalm 23, verse 1:

> "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall lack nothing." (NIV)

Out of that personal relationship every need of David was assured that it would be supplied. But Jesus says, "My sheep hear my voice." How can the Lord be our Shepherd? Only if we hear His voice. But if we hear His voice, then He's our Shepherd and all our needs are supplied. Isn't that beautiful? Cultivate hearing the Lord's voice. I'm going to speak more about that in later messages.

The second feature of hearing the Lord's voice that I mentioned is this: It's intangible. You know what I mean by intangible? It can't be touched. We can't apprehend it with our sight. We can't apprehend it with our feeling. There's only one sense that apprehends a voice and that is the sense of hearing. You see, most of our religious associations relate us to something tangible. When we talk about religion, we think about something in space and in time; a building, a church, certain kinds of furniture, pews, pulpits, maybe stained glass windows, organs, certain kinds of clothing. In some churches they wear special vestments. In most churches people dress up a little bit different to go to church. Certain kinds of books, prayer books, hymn books, books with stiff covers, usually, and in the days when I was a regular church-goer, they were usually black. There was a certain kind of a field of associations which was tangible. It was in space and time. It was associated with a place and with things. But hearing God's voice has got none of those features. It's not restricted to any particular place. It doesn't have any kind of uniform or clothing or furniture or building. It's just out there. It's very, in a way, tricky. It's almost dangerous. You've got nothing to cling onto. All the old associations, all the crutches, as Luther called them, have been taken away, and you're just in that intimate personal relationship with the Lord, an intangible

relationship.

The third feature that I wish to point out about hearing the God's voice is that it is always present in the sense of time. Hearing God's voice is never in the past and never in the future. It's always now. Only now can we hear a voice. A book we can pick up and read and put down and say it's over there. Or we can say, "I'll look at it again tomorrow." But a voice is only now. A voice has no past. A voice has no future. It shuts us up to the present. You see, what I've noticed about religious people is, much of their thinking is always about the past or the future. Christians talk about what happened in the days of Moses, or what happened in the days of Jesus, or in the days of Peter. That's all in the past. Or, they talk about what will happen when we go to heaven; how beautiful that will be. Well, I agree with that but we're not living in the past. We're not living in the future. We're living in the present. And a lot of religious people really hardly live because everything to them is either past or future. But when you realize that you've got to relate to God through hearing His voice, then that forces you into a present relationship, a present experience.

It was interesting when the Lord appeared to Moses in the desert and sent him back to deliver his people out of Egypt. Moses had a very practical question. This is recorded in Exodus, chapter 3, verses 13 and 14:

> "Moses said to God, 'Suppose I go to the Israelites, and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?' God said to Moses, 'I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I am has sent me to you.'"" (NIV)

You see, I am is present. It's not past; it's not future. God's name is present. God is living now. Our relationship with God needs to be now, and as we learn to hear God's voice, we have that present, personal relationship with the Lord.

Well, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll explain how hearing God's voice produces faith.

Radio Program

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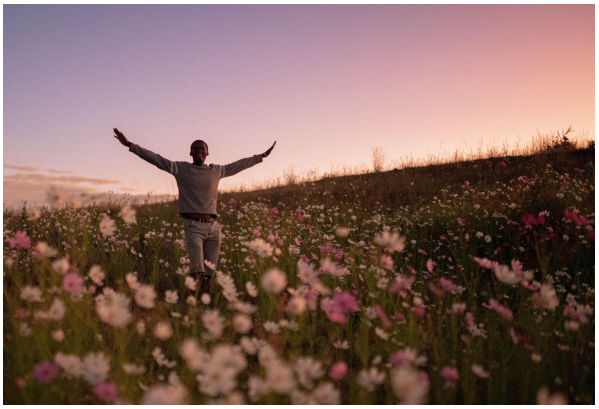

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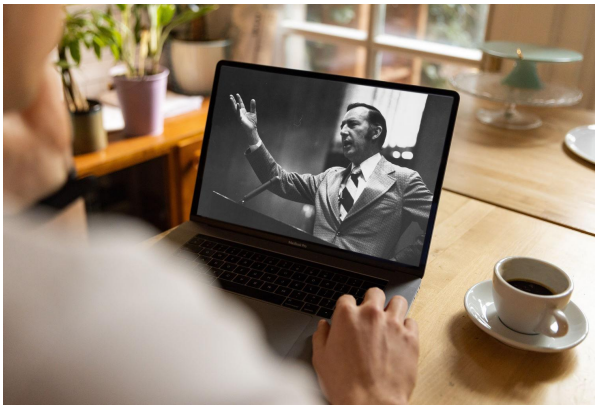

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