

Hearing from the Heart



Hearing God's Voice (Part 6)
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.

This week I'm continuing with the theme that I commenced last week, "Hearing God's Voice."

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."

In my talks last week I explained that the great, unchanging, basic requirement for an ongoing relationship with God is to hear God's voice.

In the Old Testament it was summed up in one brief phrase by the prophet Jeremiah, Jeremiah 7:23. God says:

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

That's the great, unvarying condition. In all ages and dispensations, God says, "The one thing that matters, ultimately, is obey My voice and I will be your God."

In the New Testament Jesus stated this as the one distinctive mark of all who would truly be his disciples. In John 10:27, He says this:

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

That's the mark of the true disciples and followers of Jesus in all ages. It's not a denominational label. It's not some doctrinal emphasis, but it's those who hear His voice and follow Him; and without hearing His voice, we cannot follow Him. So, hearing His voice is essential to being a follower of Jesus.

Then I explained last week that the result of hearing God's voice is true faith. Romans 10:17:

> "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing from the Word of Christ." (NASB)

Then, as we cultivate the practice of hearing God's personal word to us each day, it becomes the fresh, daily bread that nourishes us spiritually, and through it we receive daily direction and strength for our ongoing walk with God.

Now, in my talks this week I'm going to deal with the practical outworking of my theme. I'm going to ask and answer the question: How can we hear God's voice?

I want to turn, first of all, to the teaching of Jesus in the Gospels. Many times Jesus spoke about having ears to hear, and particularly so when He was teaching in parables. For instance, in Mark 4:9, we read:

> "Then Jesus said, 'He who has ears to hear, let him hear.'" (NIV)

And in Mark 4:23, a little further on in the same chapter:

> "If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear." (NIV)

What does that mean, having ears to hear? Obviously, Jesus was not referring to physical ears. Presumably all the people who were listening to him were in possession of two physical ears, at least the great majority of them. Most of them were not physically deaf. But Jesus still said, "If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear." So what was He talking about? I believe that He was talking not about outward physical hearing and physical ears, but about an inner condition of the heart. I believe the essence of what we're saying is that we have to hear God with our heart. There's such a thing as having a heart to hear God, a hearing heart.

I'll turn to an example from the life of Solomon. Early in Solomon's reign as King of Israel, it says the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream and asked him a very vital question. 1 Kings 3:5:

> "At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, 'Ask for whatever you want me to give you.'" (NIV)

That's a situation that I'm not sure most of us are ready to face. Suppose God appeared to you and said, "Ask for what you want and I'll give it to you." What would you ask for? Well, let's read Solomon's answer. 1 Kings 3:7-10. This is what Solomon said:

> "'Now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. [And now here's Solomon's request. He was confronted with a situation that was too big for him. He knew he couldn't handle it. What was he to ask for? This is what he says:] So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?' [And the comment is:] The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this." (NIV)

Now, where the translation says "a discerning heart," the Hebrew says literally, "a hearing heart." That's what we're talking about, a heart that can hear God. And Solomon received it as a gift from God. God gave it to him because he asked for it. Let me pause and ask you this. Have you ever asked God for a hearing heart? Do you realize that it's with your heart you hear God? Do you realize that this is going to make all the difference in your life whether you can hear God's voice with your heart? You see, it's with our heart that we hear the voice of God, not with our physical ears.

In my talks last week I gave what seemed to me to be rather a vivid example of a bank that has a safe and the safe is programmed electronically to open only at the voice of the bank manager. And his voice, like every voice, is unique. There's no way to copy that voice. So the only one who can open that safe is the bank manager when he says certain words in his voice. Well, I believe that your heart and my heart are like that. The heart is the safe. It's the place where we keep the things that really matter to us.

Proverbs 4:23, the words of Solomon again:

> "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."

What you have in your heart is going to settle the course of your life. So your heart is a safe that keeps things much more precious than those that are kept in a bank safe. And I believe that every child of God should have a heart that's a safe that's programmed only to open at one voice, the voice of the Lord. You remember what Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, they follow me." He said they will not follow a stranger

because they don't recognize his voice. How important it is to have a heart that will open to the voice of the Lord and will not open to the voice of an alien or a stranger. What kind of a heart is that? It's a hearing heart. We have ears to hear not physically, but in our spirit. In the innermost depths of our being we have a heart that responds to the voice of the Lord.

I've been talking about having a heart that hears God. Now I want to talk for a moment out of Scripture about the opposite condition, spiritual deafness. The Bible, both the Old and the New Testament, have much to say about people who are spiritually deaf. Jesus said of those who could not understand His parables in Matthew 13:13-15 that they were spiritually deaf. This is how He expresses it. He said:

> "This is why I speak to them in parables: 'Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand. In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become callous; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.'" (NIV)

There is a picture of people who have no heart to hear the voice of the Lord. They've become inwardly deaf. And there's one word which I think is very significant. It's a frightening word. "This people's heart has become callous." Their heart doesn't respond. It's not sensitive any longer. Compare what God said about Israel in the Old Testament in Psalm 95:7-8. He said:

> "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah, as you did that day at Massah in the desert." (NIV)

And then He goes on about those people who did harden their hearts:

> "For forty years I was angry with that generation; I said, 'They are a people whose hearts go astray, and they have not known my ways.' So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.'" (NIV)

See, I believe there are many of God's people today who never really enter God's rest. They're always wandering in the wilderness but they never enter the Promised Land. The reason is they haven't learned to hear God's voice. The only way to enter God's rest is to hear His voice.

If you put those two accounts from the New Testament and the Old Testament together, of people who were deaf in their hearts, spiritually deaf, there are two significant words that describe the condition of their hearts. The two words are calloused and hardened. That's the kind of heart that does not hear. So what's the application? What's the opposite to being calloused and hardened? I would say the key word is sensitive. We have to cultivate inward sensitivity toward the Lord and toward His voice.

Let me give you a vivid picture. Have you ever seen a blind person reading braille? Have you seen their fingers skimming over those little dots on the paper? If I were to brush my fingers over those dots, they would mean nothing to me. I would just feel something a little above the surface. But a blind person has so sensitized his fingers that those dots mean something to him. They are words. They have a message. I believe that's what it means to cultivate a sensitive heart toward the voice of the Lord. It's to have our hearts so sensitive that when God speaks we hear His voice. It means something to us. I believe that's the real key to blessing, to entering our inheritance. It's so grieving to think of the people that wandered in the wilderness when they could have been in the Promised Land, all because they had not cultivated a sensitive heart toward the voice of the Lord. Let me challenge you to do that, to cultivate a sensitive heart.

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll be speaking about four specific requirements for hearing God's voice.

Radio Program

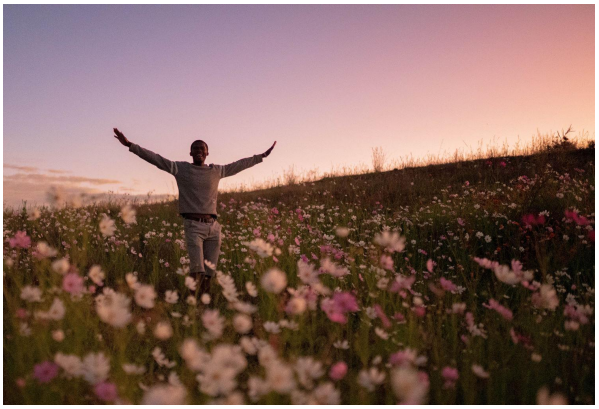
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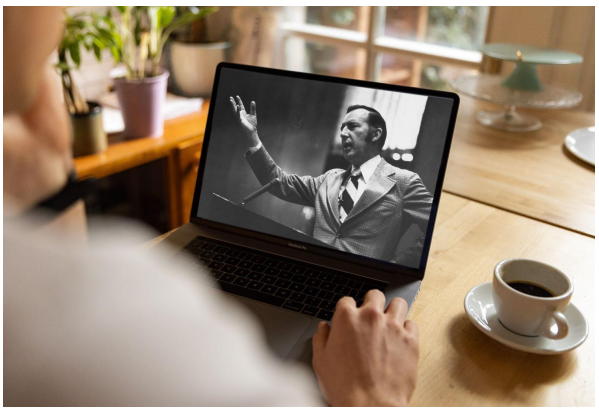
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