

God Sets the Time and the Place



Hearing God's Voice (Part 8)
by Derek Prince

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

In my two previous talks this week on hearing God's voice, I've established the following main points: First of all, we hear God's voice with our heart, not with our physical ears; therefore we must cultivate sensitivity of heart. The two words describing the hearts of those who were spiritually deaf were "hard" and "calloused."

Secondly, there are four specific requirements for achieving this kind of sensitivity of heart, and they are as follows: first, attention; second, humility; third, time; fourth, quietness. We looked at the words of David when he said, "My soul waits in silence for God only." Then we said, also yesterday, that the best preparation is worship. "Come let us worship and bow down and kneel before the Lord our Maker." And then the Psalm goes on, "Today, if you hear His voice, harden not your hearts." So preparation for hearing God's voice is best achieved by worship.

The truth that I'm going to deal with today follows on naturally from the points I've just established. The truth is, God sets the time and the place. We have to give absolute priority to God before all our own interests and activities. We may have our own program, we may have our own interests, we may have the things we're excited about, the things we're eager to get done. But if we want to hear God's voice, we have to be prepared to let those things go, "to let go and relax," as the psalmist says. We have to let God set the time and the place, and it may not be the time or the place of our choosing.

I want to give you three examples of men who met with God and heard His voice. The three men I'm going to speak about are Moses, Elijah, and Jeremiah. First we'll look at Moses as it's described in Numbers 7:89. This describes how Moses went into the tabernacle that had been erected in the wilderness, and there he spoke with God, and God spoke with him. As I read this verse, always a kind of stillness comes over my soul. I think of that tabernacle there out in the blazing sunshine of the desert, surrounded by things that were barren, dusty, and then inside, the coolness, the shade, the quietness. And that always challenges me to get away

from the heat and the dust and the busyness and the activity, to come into a quiet place where I can speak with God and God with me. This is what it says about Moses:

> "When Moses entered the Tent of Meeting [the tabernacle] to speak with the Lord, he heard the voice speaking to him from between the two cherubim over the atonement cover on the ark of the Testimony. And he [that's the Lord] spoke with him [Moses]." (NIV)

See, there was a place where God spoke with Moses. It was behind the second veil of the tabernacle, from the Holy of Holies, from the most sacred place. And that shows me how sacred it is to hear the voice of the Lord. It was from between the two cherubim. The cherubim speak again of worship and also of fellowship. And it was from over the atonement cover on the ark of the testimony, the place where the blood had been sprinkled. It spoke of covered and forgiven sin. So, how significant all those points are. It was a place of worship. It was a place of fellowship. It was a place where there was the eternal evidence of sin forgiven and covered. And bear in mind, uncovered and unforgiven sin will always keep us from hearing the voice of the Lord. And so that's where Moses heard the voice of the Lord.

I think of something that Jesus said to His disciples in Matthew 6:6, that you, when you pray, go into your inner room. Why into a inner room? Surely to get away from all distractions, to shut out all the sounds and the sights of the world, to be still before God. I believe every Christian should have some kind of inner room. I remember a man who was a friend of mine who used to go into the closet, under the stairs, with the brooms and all those things, but that's where he heard from God. It became a sacred place for him.

The second example of a man who heard God's voice is Elijah. Elijah had had the tremendous personal triumph. He'd called down fire on the sacrifice on Mount Carmel. He'd humbled and humiliated and even had executed all the false prophets. But then, he'd run away from a woman, Jezebel, gone out into the wilderness and asked God to take his life. God had sent an angel to strengthen him, and in the strength that he received from the angel, he'd made his way to Mount Horeb, the very place where God first made His covenant with Israel. And this is what happened to Elijah when he got there to Mount Horeb. 1 Kings 19:11-13:

> "The Lord said to Elijah, 'Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.' Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire."

Three tremendous demonstrations of God's power: the wind that shattered the mountains, an earthquake, a fire. But how significant God wasn't in any of those tremendous demonstrations of His power. And then it goes on like this:

> "And after the fire came a gentle whisper."

You remember what I said, that God doesn't shout. Some people picture God as a man shouting. I think that was Hitler's picture of God, a man shouting. A lot of dictators and people like that have seen God as just a big man shouting, but God is very different. After all the demonstrations of His power, there came a gentle whisper and the impact on Elijah was tremendous.

> "When Elijah heard it, [not the wind, not the earthquake, not the fire, but the gentle whisper] he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave."

What did that mean, pulling his cloak over his face? It meant worship. It meant bowing. It meant humbling himself. It meant opening up his spirit to God. Now, when he was ready to listen:

> "Then a voice said to him, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?'" (NIV)

Think of the careful preparation that God made for Elijah to hear His voice. God is concerned that we hear His voice. But remember, God may not be in the wind, the earthquake, or the fire, but if you have ears to hear, after that there'll be a gentle whisper. When you hear that, you'll want to put your cloak over your face. You'll want to worship. Your heart will bow down.

It's important to see the results that came in Elijah's life from hearing that gentle whisper. There was strength and new direction for his ministry. When he went to Horeb, he was really a beaten man. He was ready to give up, to quit, to throw in the towel. But after he'd heard God's voice, he was a conqueror and he had new direction. Up to that time, he didn't know what to do next, but hearing God's voice gave him direction for his ministry. It will do the same for you and me. Strength and new direction come from hearing God's

voice.

The third man that I want to speak about who heard the voice of God is Jeremiah. This is what Jeremiah says in Jeremiah 18:1-6:

> "This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: 'Go down to the potter's house, and there I will give you my message.'"

You see, God said, "If you want to hear my voice, you've got to be in a certain place; I'm going to speak to you but you've got to be in the right place at the right time." So, Jeremiah obeyed. He said:

> "I went down to the potter's house, and I saw him [the potter] working at the wheel. But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as it seemed best to him. Then the word of the Lord came to me: 'O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter does?' declares the Lord. 'Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.'" (NIV)

You see, there was a time and a place. God wanted Jeremiah in the potter's house because He wanted him to see what the potter was doing with the pot on the wheel, because that was going to be a picture of how God was going to deal with Israel, how God is dealing with Israel. Remember today Israel as a pot in God's hands, and He's shaping them on the wheels of circumstance and history right now. That message is true today. But Jeremiah couldn't get the message until he was in the right place. He had to obey. He had to be there. God made a kind of appointment with Jeremiah. He said, "If you'll go to the potter's house, I'll speak to you." And you see, before Jeremiah had a message for others, he had to hear from God.

It's always impressed me that in Bible schools and seminaries, they spend so much time training people how to speak, but seldom do they train people how to hear. And if you've never heard from God, you have nothing to say. And believe me, a man who's heard from God is worth listening to, even if he doesn't have all the fine points of homiletics. What people are waiting for today is a man who's heard from God.

I just want to close with a little example from my own experience. Some years back I was in Europe. I was in Denmark, the native country of my first wife, Lydia, and the Lord very clearly directed me to go to a certain cliff top overlooking what the Danes call the Western Sea, what the British call the North Sea, and it was a fine winter afternoon. The sun was going down in the western sky. The rays were falling across the water and shining into my face, and when I got there to the cliff top and quieted my heart before God and looked at the sea, the Lord spoke to me for about one hour. He showed me that the conduct of the sea, the way the sea's waves behaved, was like the history of the Church. The Church started with high tide, but gradually the waters went out and there was low tide, the Dark Ages. Then the tide turned and the waters began to come in again, but they came in wave by wave, one great move of the Spirit after another. And God showed me things that I'm not free to share with you right now about what's going to happen as the Church age comes to its climax. But all that happened because I had an appointment with God on a cliff top overlooking the North Sea.

Well, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll be dealing with the question: How can we be sure that it really was God's voice we heard? That's an important question.

Radio Program

Transcript: TS-R058-103-ENG
Last Updated: 12 Apr 2023
Website: derekprince.com

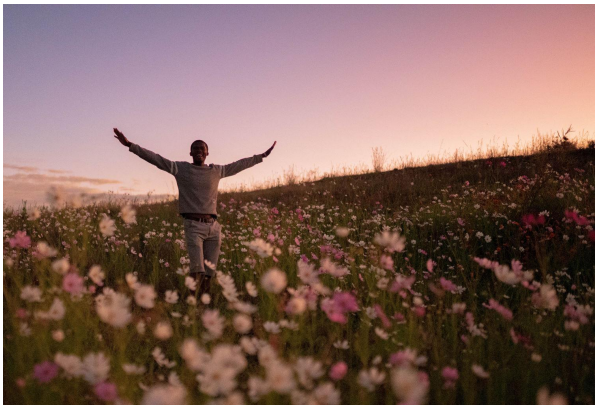


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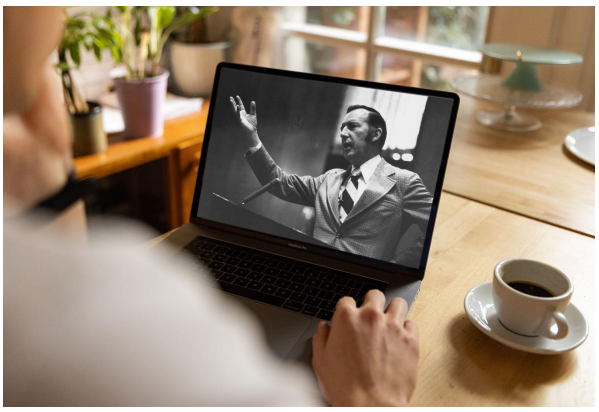
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