

How Can We Be Sure? (Part 2)



Hearing God's Voice (Part 10)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we draw near to the close of another week. Today I'm going to continue and complete my series on "Hearing God's Voice." Yesterday I was dealing with the question, "How can we be sure that it really was God's voice we heard?" A very important question.

Today I want to share with you one further way in which we may expect to receive confirmation that we've heard God's voice, and that is through our fellow believers.

I want to take an example, first of all, from the New Testament; the sending out of Barnabas and Saul for apostolic ministry from the church at Antioch. This is described in Acts 13:1-3. And this is what it says:

> "In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen and Saul. [Five men are named: Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen and Saul, who, of course, later became Paul.] While these men were worshipping the Lord and fasting, [and remember what I said earlier about worship being the best preparation to hear the Lord's voice. And they were fasting. They were really seeking God with all their heart.] While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' ['The Holy Spirit said,' notice that. I've pointed out already it's the Holy Spirit who brings to us the voice of God.] So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off." (NASB)

Now, I want you to notice the words that the Holy Spirit used, because it's important. The Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." The Holy Spirit had already called Barnabas and Saul. This was not the first time that they heard about this. But this was public confirmation, through their brothers in the assembly, that their call was from God. And that was very, very important. They needed that public confirmation.

We need to go back into the history of God's dealings with Paul, a little, and see that right from the time that Jesus first appeared to Paul, he knew that he was to be an apostle. This is what he says and he emphasizes this in various places in his writing, that his apostleship was not of men. He says, for instance, in Galatians 1:1:

> "Paul, an apostle, sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead..." (NIV)

Notice, he was sent not from man nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father. So Paul's apostolic calling came direct from God, not from men. Nevertheless, God confirmed it through men. And this happened in the church at Antioch where the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." They had already received their individual call, but this was public confirmation. This shows what importance God Himself attaches to confirmation, that we've rightly heard His voice.

I believe this public confirmation in the church of Antioch, of Paul's calling, served at least three purposes. First of all, it strengthened Paul's own faith. I believe many of us know that there are times when we need confirmation from others. We're walking a rather lonely road. We're wondering if we really have heard God aright. Things seem so impossible, what God has spoken about seems so far away. And then, God in His grace gives us confirmation through our fellow believers.

Secondly, this incident at Antioch validated Paul's call to his fellow believers. It wasn't enough that he knew he was called, they had to know he was called to send him out and to support him.

Thirdly, this incident emphasized the interdependence of the member's of Christ's Body. And that's something to which God attaches tremendous importance, that we don't act unilaterally, just on our own, that we realize we're members of a Body and we depend on the other members. None of us can just act on his own and say, "It doesn't matter what the others do. I know I'm right." That's an attitude which is almost invariably wrong.

I want you to notice two points about this incident, they're both important. First of all, the confirmation to Paul and Barnabas came through fellow believers of proven integrity and maturity. That's important. It matters through whom God speaks to us. If it's a believer whose faithfulness, whose maturity, whose integrity we know; that's much more significant than somebody who may be very unstable, perhaps just a new believer, perhaps not leading a very godly kind of life. Confirmation through that kind of person is worth relatively little. But when it comes through fellow believers of proven integrity and maturity, it means a lot.

Secondly, truly spiritual men do not go ahead unilaterally, regardless of their fellow believers. I respect that in Paul's character. He knew God had called him, but he didn't just go ahead and say, "Well, I'm going. Good-bye." He waited on God with his fellow believers until the call was validated and confirmed. Then he went with their support and their prayers. Believe me, all of us need to do that.

It's important to see that our ability to hear God through others depends to a large extent on the nature of our relationship with them. In other words, the better our relationship is with others, the better we can either hear God voice through them or receive confirmation through them. Right relationships are very, very important in being able to hear God's voice. And there are three special relationships through which we should expect to hear God, three relationships to which the New Testament attaches special importance and even, I would say, sanctity.

The three relationships are between pastors and their people, between husbands and wives, and between parents and children. Let's look at what the Scripture says about each of these relationships briefly. Hebrews 13:7:

> "Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith." (NIV)

The word "remember" there indicates respectful consideration. "Have respect for your leaders, they spoke to you the word of God." Consequently, if God speaks to you independently, in another way, directly and personally; it should be very important to you that your leaders, who've already spoken to you the Word of God, should confirm what God has said. Now I'm not saying this will happen one hundred percent. But if I were in a situation where I were a member of a congregation that had godly leadership, that spoke the Word of God to the people, and I thought I'd heard from God, and when I went to my pastor or the elders or whoever the leaders were and they waited on God and prayed and they came up with the answer, "We don't feel this is God," believe me, I would be tremendously cautious about going ahead with that thing. Because, it's normal and it's right for God's people to hear through their leaders.

Then there's the relationship between husbands and wives, Ephesians 5:22-24:

> "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything." (NIV)

There's another sacred relationship. God in His infinite wisdom has made the husband the head of the wife; responsible for caring for the wife, responsible for her spiritual condition. Now I understand that many husbands are not really accepting this responsibility. But nevertheless, the scriptural order is for the wife to submit to her husband. It's very dangerous for a married woman to claim that she's heard the voice of God and then to go ahead, even when her husband doesn't agree and doesn't give his approval and blessing. I've known a good many cases in which women did that and almost always the result has been some kind of spiritual disaster, because it's contrary to divine order. And the kind of spirit in a woman that says, "Well, no matter what my husband says, I'm going to do it!" That's not the kind of attitude that really hears from God. That's a rather hard, rebellious type of attitude and rebellious people don't accurately hear the voice of God.

The third relationship is similar and also a sacred one, the relationship between parents and children. Ephesians 6:1:

> "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." (NIV)

Notice the safeguard, "in the Lord." If parents demand their children do something morally wrong or totally unscriptural, they're not obligated. But otherwise, children are obligated to obey their parents. And if God speaks to a child, God can also speak to the child's parents and cause them to accept what He has said to the child.

So there's a twofold application to these relationships. First of all, the positive. We should expect to hear through these relationships. Secondly, the negative. We should be doubly cautious if we ever think God has spoken to us in a way that ignores or sets aside these sacred relationships.

Well, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again next week at this same time, Monday through Friday. Next week we'll be moving into another rich and exciting theme from God's Word.

This week I'm making a special offer of my book Purposes of Pentecost. This book will help you to get better acquainted with the Holy Spirit and so equip you to hear God's voice with clarity and certainty.

Also, my complete series of talks this week on "Hearing God's Voice" is available on a single, carefully edited cassette. Stay tuned for details.

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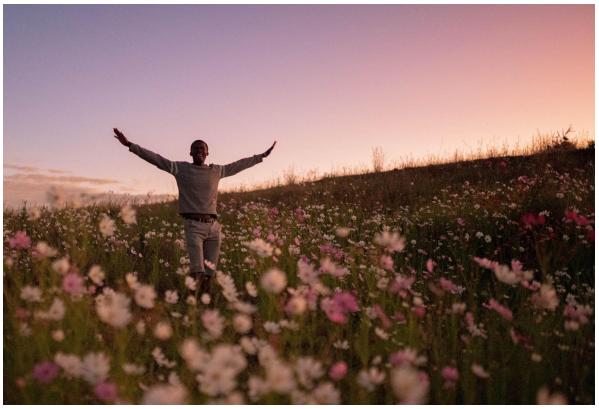

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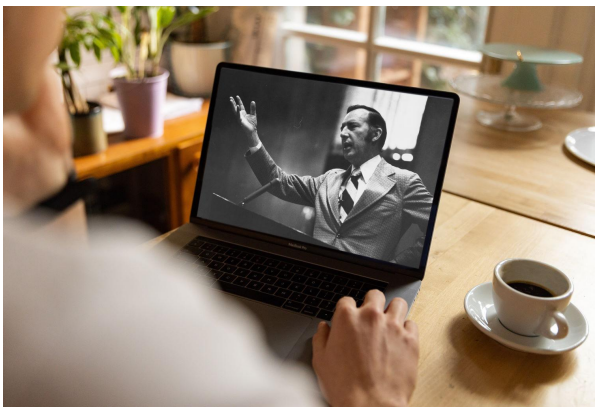

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