

The First Direction



God's Medicine Bottle (Part 2)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, as we continue with our theme for this week which is of such practical importance for everyone of us: God's Medicine Bottle.

In my introductory talk yesterday I described how, through a period of prolonged sickness, I was led to the discovery that, in the Bible, God has provided for us His own medicine bottle. I related how I was a soldier serving with the British Forces in the north African Desert in World War II and how through the exposure to sun and sand I contracted a condition of the skin which just did not yield to any form of medical treatment and which after various provisional diagnoses was diagnosed as chronic eczema, and how I lay in hospital for one year on end struggling with this problem; does God have a way to heal me?—and how I searched my Bible day by day, and one day came to this passage in Proverbs, chapter 4, verses 20 through 22, which is what I Call God's Medicine Bottle. And I'll quote that passage, now again from Proverbs 4:20 through 22. Make a note of that reference.

> "My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings. Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart. For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh." (KJV)

I mentioned yesterday that the alternative reading in the margin for health was medicine. And I saw that here, through His Words and His sayings, if I could find them, God was offering me something which He described as medicine to all my flesh, that is my entire physical body. And so I decided to take God's Word as my medicine in a very simple, naive kind of way. When I did that, God reminded me that when a doctor gives a person medicine, the directions for taking it are normally on the bottle and He went on to say this passage (that's Proverbs, chapter 4, verses 20 through 22) is my medicine bottle and the directions are on the bottle; you'd better study them. And so I went back and looked at it carefully and I saw that there were four directions for taking God's Word as our medicine. And I'll just recapitulate them briefly.

Number one, attend to my Words.

Number two, incline thine ear unto my sayings.

Number three, let them not depart from thine eyes.

And number four, keep them in the midst of thine heart.

Today I'm going to explain the first of these four directions, that is, attend to my words.

We need to understand that God, when He speaks to us, requires our undivided attention. If Almighty God is willing to speak to us at all, surely any sense of propriety would indicate that we need to listen with undivided attention. We need to give our God our full and respectful attention. But you see, that's not really the attitude of many people today. Because of the tremendous proliferation of the media, radio, television, and so on, and because of various different factors in our contemporary culture, we've almost cultivated the practice of listening to two different things at one time. We suffer from a disease which could be called "divided attention." I'm amazed when I go into a home and see teenagers doing their homework and watching television at the same time. They're not giving full attention to one or to the other.

Or, in so many places we have nowadays what is called background music. We carry on a conversation but at the same time, with one ear we're listening to the music in the background. I have to say that for me, personally, this is intensely frustrating. And I'm the kind of person, I think probably because of my experiences that I'm relating, I wish and desire to concentrate on something and not to dissipate my attention. I think that's probably something that God has conditioned in me and I'm not going to give it up. If I'm having a conversation, I want to listen to the person who's talking. If I'm listening to music, then I want to listen to the music. I love music. When I listen to it, I listen to it with my full attention. But you see, all through the Bible, the primary key to healing from God is hearing. Let me say that simply. The key to healing is hearing. It's what we listen to and how we listen. Jesus said to His disciples, "Take heed what you hear." He also said, "Take heed how you hear." We have to put the two together. It's what we listen to and how we listen to it.

There's another passage in the Old Testament relating to healing which brings out the same emphasis. It's in Exodus, chapter 15, verse 26, where the Lord told Israel, through Moses, this:

> "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)

Notice that final statement. That goes right along with the medicine bottle; "I provide the medicine bottle and I am your doctor." In modern Hebrew that's exactly what that word would be translated—I am the Lord, your doctor. God says to His people, "I'm willing to be your doctor, the doctor of your physical body." But He says, "there are conditions." He begins with an "if." The first condition, the primary one, the basic one, "If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God." You see, it's what we listen to. That word that's translated there, diligently hearken, in Hebrew, is a repetition of the verb, "to listen." It goes like this: If thou wilt listen listening to the voice of the Lord thy God—all the emphasis is on listening.

When I was seeking healing for myself I came across this verse in conjunction with the one in Proverbs that I've quoted and I asked myself, what does it mean to listen listening, and it was as though God gave me an answer. He said, "You've got two ears, a right ear and a left; to listen listening means to listen to me with both ears, with your right ear and with your left. Don't listen to me with your right ear and something else with your left because the result of that will be confusion." So you see, all through, the emphasis is on attending, listening, giving God your undivided attention. That's the primary instruction on God's medicine bottle. It matters what we hear and how we hear. This is not only the key to being healed, it's the key to receiving faith and of course they go very closely together because it's faith that enables us to receive the healing that God has provided and to benefit from the medicine.

Let me quote here one of my favorite scriptures which was also made real to me during this long period in hospital, Romans 10:17:

> "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (KJV)

I was lying there at that time, I was continually saying to myself, "I know if I had faith, God would heal me." But then I would always say immediately after that, "But then I don't have faith." And when I said, "Well, I don't have faith," I found myself in what John Bunyan in Pilgrim's Progress describes as the "slough of despond," a dark, lonely valley of despair. One day, as I was reading my Bible, my eyes fell on this verse, Romans 10:17: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." And there were two words that leaped out at me, "faith cometh." In other words, you don't need to despair. Maybe you don't have faith, but faith comes. If you

don't have it, you can get it. So then, of course, I looked to see how faith comes and it says, "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." And again, just as in Proverbs 4: 20 through 22, I was directed right back to the Word of God and I began to analyze that verse and I saw, we start with the Word of God. That's the beginning. And, we listen to the Word of God, carefully, and out of that listening, then there comes what the Bible calls hearing, the ability to hear God. And then out of hearing, there develops faith. So, it's the Word of God, which when we first attend to it, produces hearing. And as we continue hearing, out of that hearing, faith develops. So, in a sense, everything depends of how we approach the Word of God. Do we approach it with undivided attention? Do we listen with both ears? Are we focused on the Word of God? Do we get into a condition, spiritually and mentally, what the Bible calls hearing, able to hear what God is saying. I'm sure many, many people read the Bible but never hear God. They don't hear their God because their minds are taken up with other things. They're wondering how they're going to pay the rent, or what the weather is going to be like, or they're concerned with the political situation. There are other forces that work in their minds, consequently they never develop hearing. We have to develop hearing, and out of hearing develops faith. So it's the Word of God, an attitude to God's Word, that produces hearing, and out of hearing comes faith. So always, we're directed back to the Word of God and how we receive it. And so the first instruction on God's medicine bottle is, "attend to my words."

All right, our time is up for today but I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this same time. Tomorrow I'll be dealing with the second of the four directions on God's Medicine Bottle.

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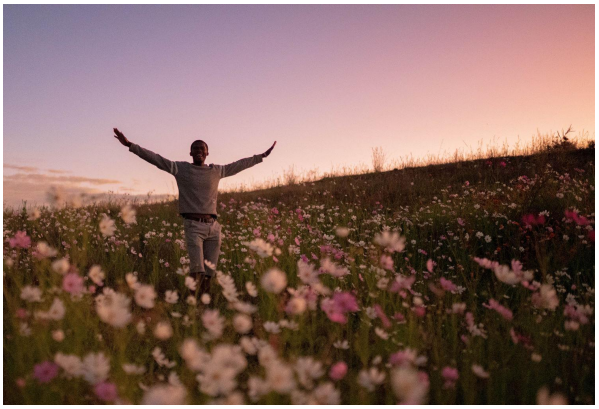

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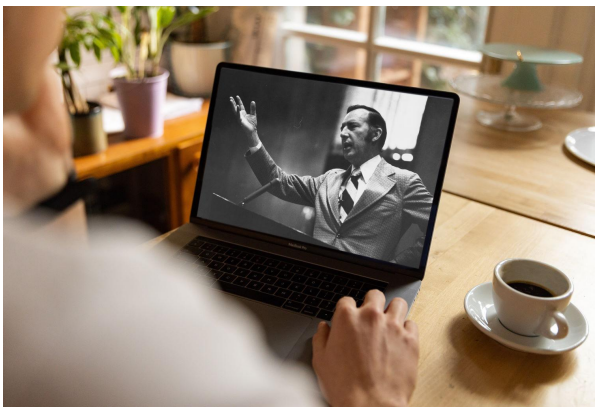

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