

Hearing God 7-2-99

In Revelation 2,3 seven times we read "He who has an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." Do you have an ear to hear what the Spirit says? I believe that every born again child of God has an ear, the question is do you have an ear to hear. Do you have a desire to listen? Is what the Spirit is saying to you important enough to, first of all, hang on to it, and then let it work in your life, and finally transform your life?

Desire to hear is a gift from God. The natural man doesn't want to hear the things of God because they take Lordship over your natural desires. Phil 2:13 "it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." I remember praying every night for God to grant me the gift for a hunger for his Word. When you pray a prayer like that He loves to answer. The Father wants to give his children good things. Ask and you shall receive. Do lack desire to hear, to listen, then ask for it!

Now once you have a desire and you are going to have a listening ear. You are going to come to the source – the living Lord Jesus and ask for living bread, that He will share his life with you. Now as He does you have a great responsibility. Of little Samuel it was said, "He let none of God's words fall to the ground". Jesus told the Pharisees in John 15:24 that since they had seen his miracles they would be held accountable. Once you are entrusted with the words of God you are then a steward, and like the stewards in the parable you need to invest those words in your life, not bury them. When we one day stand before Jesus He is going to ask us what we did with the words. So to pray for a desire is a step that brings repercussions, responsibilities. The following prayer is attributed to Thomas a Kempis "Let not thy Word, O Lord, become a judgement upon us, that we hear it and do it not, that we believe it and obey it not."

How will He speak to you? Let's open up to Acts and hop around a bit. WE are going to be like frogs this morning and jump from Lily Pad to lily pad of God revealing his will to his servants.

6:9 Sometimes you will hear the Spirit use another – The words will be life to you and there will be no doubt God has spoken through that person.

7:38, 17:11 The recorded living words show us God's will

8:26 An angel can speak directly to you. (audible)

8:29 The Spirit can speak to you. (inaudible)

9:10 The Lord himself can speak to you in a vision.

There are numerous repetitions of the above methods so I wont bother to cover the same ground.

10:10 God can speak to us in a trance (day dream) notice the confirmation.

11:18 Testimony and Scripture can confirm a truth.

15:28 After testimony and Scripture the elders discern what the pleasure of the Holy Spirit is.

11:27-29 Prophetic gift can instruct you. Notice they decided when they heard.
13:2 Worship and fasting may open the ears to hear what the Spirit is saying.
16:6 –9 “kept by the HS” A lack of peace? Spirit of Jesus would not allow...?
Night vision – dream?

These are just some examples of the way the Lord speaks.

Henry Blackaby taught me in the book *Experiencing God* that when you pray expect an answer. Faith looks with expectancy after prayer and expects God to speak in some way. When you have an expectant attitude you are more likely to hear what it is God is speaking to you. Sometimes we ask but then ignore the answer because it wasn't the one we wanted.

Then there is the discipline of being still before God and listening. We saw that in the Acts 13 reference. Our world is so full of noise and entertainment that competes with the voice of God, that I believe we must make more of an effort than in any other generation to learn the discipline of being still before God. Can you not watch with him one hour? I would guess that it is near to an impossibility for the average American to sit still for one hour without a book, a walkman, a TV, a hobby or toy of some kind to capture your attention. We have lost the art of being still. Jesus took it at the stillest time of the day – before sunrise. We would find our walk with him maturing in ways we never dreamed if we would follow his example and meet him there. Listen to Dag Hammerskjold's conviction, "How can you expect to keep your powers of hearing when you never want to listen? That God should have time for you, you seem to take as much for granted as that you cannot have time for Him."

To develop a keen sense of hearing God's voice you must be willing to be obedient. James 1:22-25 It's action time! Not forgetting but doing it is the path to blessing. Now in the example of Paul wanting to go to an area but being directed to Macedonia we have a great example of not second-guessing but believing. What does he find at Philippi- a group of women- where is the man in his vision? He and Silas are beaten and put in stocks. What does he do? Question the vision? Blame God? Say why me? NO, he worships in prayer and song. And who gets saved but a Roman soldier – the Jailer and his family –

The actions we must take to be obedient may result in personal difficulty. They cost Jesus his life. AW Tozer said, "Among the plastic saints of our times Jesus has to do all the dying all we want is to hear another sermon about his dying." – but in the process of obedience, there is blessing: The peace of God, maturing in Christ, the fruit of the Spirit as we walk with Jesus and become more like him.

Do you have an ear to hear what the Spirit is saying to the church? Will you listen and then act even if it costs you? John 15:3-5