

## ***The Ear of a Servant part 2 12-9-01***

John 14:15-21, 12:48-50, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Last week we went over the ways that God spoke to men in the book of Acts. Most of us have only experienced the most common two, the Lord speaking through a brother or sister, and the Holy Spirit making the Word come alive.

Today, I want to just touch on another way He speaks, one which we should all be familiar with, the voice of the Holy Spirit within. God does communicate with man and desires to speak to each of us.

In speaking about the fulfillment of the New Covenant, Jesus said in John 14:15-21 (NIV)<sup>15</sup> *"If you love me, you will obey what I command.<sup>16</sup> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever--<sup>17</sup> the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.<sup>18</sup> I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.<sup>19</sup> Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.<sup>20</sup> On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.<sup>21</sup> Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him."*

Who has Jesus commands? His servants that love Him, whom He indwells! They hear their Master's instructions and obey His voice. Jesus promised to reveal Himself to us, to live in us. Just like Jesus saw the Father and heard from Him, we can see a revelation of Jesus and hear from Him.

Our example in all things, Christ Jesus, told us that He only spoke what He heard from the Father. He was even shown the way in which He was to say it. John 12:48-50 (NIV)<sup>48</sup> *There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day.<sup>49</sup> For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it.<sup>50</sup> I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say."*

Jesus got alone with the Father and communed with Him. We get hints in the Gospels of His prayer life. One time, no one could find Him, and when they did He was alone praying. When He sent them off after feeding the multitude, He went to pray alone in the mountain. Before picking the disciples He spent the night in prayer. But those special times could not be the only times He heard from the Father, for He says that He only speaks what He hears the Father tell Him to say. Jesus had to walk in constant communion with the Father. Since He is our example, we need to take note that Jesus always had an ear to hear what the Spirit said.

In Paul's closing instructions to the Thessalonians he lists some things that should be in every believer's life. 1 Thess 5:16-24 (NIV)<sup>16</sup> *Be joyful always;*<sup>17</sup> *pray continually;*<sup>18</sup> *give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.<sup>19</sup> Do not put out the Spirit's fire;*<sup>20</sup> *do not treat prophecies with contempt;*<sup>21</sup> *Test everything. Hold on to the good.<sup>22</sup> Avoid every kind of evil.<sup>23</sup> May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole*

*spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>24</sup> The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.*

To have the ear of a servant, one must have a heart of love for the Master. If we are walking in a love relationship with Him, there are certain things that we can watch out for in order to keep an open heart to heart communion. One of the barometers is joy. When I was in a cult, this was my first major clue that something was wrong. The joy I once had as a believer was gone. That is because I was fighting the Holy Spirit, sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously. No one commented any more on my smile. My heart was almost always heavy. The same thing happened when it was time for me to disconnect from a corrupt ministry. Since joy is a fruit of the Spirit, we know the clear lines of communication have broken down when the joy is gone. When you find yourself there, start checking why. As redeemed children of God, we might not be happy about everything, but we should always have a heart of joy for all He has done and what He has planned for us.

<sup>17</sup> *"pray continually"* Keep the lines of communication open. Prayer is not only speaking but also listening. Do you remember what little Samuel was to answer when he heard God call his name? *"Speak Lord, your servant is listening."* What a perfect illustration of the heart of a servant. Col 4:2 (NIV)<sup>2</sup> *Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.* As you pray, watch for God's instruction. It may come as that 'still small voice' in the heart. A Scripture passage may come to mind or part of a verse. I firmly believe that God is Sovereign over all things, even my thoughts I ask for Him to influence. I've heard a scripture in my heart, opened my Bible and found it spoke precisely to the situation for which I was in prayer. We need each other's prayers and we need to let the Spirit of God direct those prayers. This should go on continually throughout the day. I'll be going along and suddenly a person comes to mind, or I see a picture that reminds me of them. I take that as a cue to pray for them. If we believe God is the God of all, then everything that comes our way throughout the day can be a part of His communion with us. A few days ago I saw an opening in the clouds where the sun on the other side was illuminating the mountain peak and I knew God was saying, "Keep your eyes on the goal. In the world you will have tribulation but be of good cheer for I have overcome the world." A friend approached me and told me the same thing. And what do you know, as I commune with Him my heart is full of joy. "And He walks with me and He talks with me, and He tells me I am His own. And the joy we share as we tarry there, none other has ever known." He wants that to be our daily experience. The more we walk in the Presence of God and experience that communion of prayer, the more attuned our ears are to hear His voice and the more our hearts desire to obey.

<sup>18</sup> *"give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."* A thankful heart is more inclined to be a listening heart. If we will believe that all things work together for good, then we can give thanks in all circumstances. That shows our faith in His loving hand, our trust in His character. This is impossible when we are not walking in Him. Just like joy is not possible when we are out of His will, so the giving of thanks in all circumstances is impossible when we are out of His will. But when we walk in His presence and allow His love to envelop us like a blanket, we can see beyond the circumstances with eyes of faith. Our minds dwell on the positive

things we have learned through the difficult circumstances, instead of the pain of the experience. We trust that God is finishing what He started. Our ears are open to hear not closed in defiance. The more bitter we are the less clearly we are able to hear. A thankful heart is another gauge on our relational meter.

<sup>19</sup> *"Do not put out the Spirit's fire;<sup>20</sup> do not treat prophecies with contempt."* It is easy to douse the fire. The Holy Spirit is a gentleman. The Scripture does not compare Him with a dove without purpose. If we do not desire His presence we can easily shoo Him away. Jo Guerrero tells the following true story.

*"My five-year-old daughter, Barbara, had disobeyed me and had been sent to her room. After a few minutes, I went in to talk with her about what she had done. Teary-eyed, she asked, "Why do we do wrong things, Mommy?" "Well," I replied, "sometimes the devil tells us to do something wrong and we listen to him. We need to listen to God instead." To which she sobbed, "But God doesn't talk loud enough!"*

God speaks to our heart and directs us, but when the heart is unwilling, when we face the god of our own will – splash – the water goes on that fire, and our spiritual ears grow insensitive. Then we treat prophecies with contempt. God is speaking through a message or a friend and confirming what that fire was all about and we start to mock. "How do they know? Do they think they have a direct line to God? Holier than thou!" Let the word through a brother or sister fan the flame, not quench it. As you grow in the Lord you will discern when the words are a confirmation or when they are just that person's idea.

Let me give you an example of my own failure here. A thought crossed my mind. I know the Spirit checked me not to say. My flesh desired to say it. I reworked it to try to get around the Spirit's check, and went ahead. Splash – I doused the flame. I went on and said more that I should not have said. The joy faded, and peace was absent, until I apologized for my willing disobedience to His loving voice.

<sup>21</sup> *"Test everything. Hold on to the good.<sup>22</sup> Avoid every kind of evil."*

Neither should we get an inclination and just jump right in. God wants us to be sure it is His leading and not our own deceitful hearts. You can test it by taking it to the Word as we read about last week. You can test it by taking it to people whose lives are an example of godliness, who know God's word. Often we find in Scripture God will give a promise or instruction twice. This has been called "double confirmation". One time I got this idea I was suppose to go to India. I thought it was God. But it was never confirmed again. When God is directing I can put the fleece out again and make sure He is the One who is guiding and not some inclination of self. To hear, we must live up to what we have already heard. To avoid every kind of evil is to align your heart with God's attitude. Know that sin is destructive and deadly and keep your distance.

<sup>23</sup> *"May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."* God is the God of peace. Where He leads us, we find green pastures and still waters. The Word He speaks to our heart is that green pasture and still water. As we hear, our hearts are at peace. Colossians 3:15 tells us that the peace that comes from God

should be the umpire in our heart, since we are called to peace. When you are out of God's will or contemplating something that is against the Spirit within you – you will not have peace. Let peace help you determine what the Spirit is saying to you. A confirmation of His voice can be the accompanying peace in your heart. When I find His heart on a matter, I know it is the best that can be done, and so I can rest in that. Phil 4:6-7 (NIV)<sup>6</sup> *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.*<sup>7</sup> *And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Then Paul prays that their spirit be kept blameless. The spirit in man is where God makes His home within us. May we always have a comfortable home for Him there, a surrendered and loving home. May our soul (mind, will, emotions) be kept blameless. Here is where we have so much of our struggle. May our mind be renewed to think as He does, our will yielded to His, our emotions kept in sync with His. And may our body be kept blameless. If our spirit and soul are kept the body will follow. The body operates at the soul's direction. Our actions are that of a servant when our spirits are the home of the Holy Spirit and our souls are surrendered in love.

<sup>24</sup> *"The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it."*

God is faithful! Your Shepherd will see you through this life. We may not always be the faithful servant we should be, but that does not change His faithfulness to us. HE will do it. He will keep you. He will see you end up in the image of His Son. Let Him! Listen and yield.

I heard from God in my teaching situation. This week 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the class played hooky. I thought it would be a good time to review with them the lessons we had learned this semester from the book of Genesis. That would not only help them in life but in the final that is coming up in a week. After 15 minutes of arguing with me about watching a movie instead, they finally realized I would not relent. One person continued to distract the class. Usually they all encourage each other to listen. That day was a different story. Finally I had to make one girl come and sit beside me. She was very upset for the ten minutes that remained. She was forced to obey. I don't think she heard any of the good things that were shared.

God, as our Teacher, wants us to hear and review for the difficulties we will face in the future. We often insist that we would rather do something else. Finally when we realize we must listen we settle in to hear, but allow ourselves to be distracted or worse distract others from hearing. Then God confines us out of love or with a tough situation so that we must hear. We can resent that too, and like the teenager in my class, sit there pouting and not hearing the Words of Life He so lovingly wants to share with us. Life is coming. The test will take place. When it happens, will we whine that it is too difficult? Whose fault is that? Lord, teach us to value the voice of the Spirit, the love that He wants to convey, the heart that wants to share good things with us.