

Hearing the Lord's Voice

Hearing and understanding the Lord's voice is a vital and integral part of our daily Christian life. We are actually participating in Christ's own experience described in Isaiah 50:4-5: ⁴ "The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary. *He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to hear as the learned.* ⁵ *The Lord GOD has opened My ear; and I was not rebellious, nor did I turn away.*" The Lord Himself needed to have His ear awakened morning by morning in order to live an obedient life in His humanity. And He lives His life in us today in the same way that He lived His life on the earth. Indeed, His human life is being reproduced in us by the Spirit. Thus, we should become more familiar with this aspect of His life so that we can hear and understand His voice in us.

The Lord's voice is like an inner drawing

The Lord's voice in us is described in John's Gospel as an inner drawing. In John 6:37 the Lord says, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out." Then again in verses 44-45 He says, ⁴⁴ "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me *draws him*; and I will raise him up at the last day. ⁴⁵ It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' There-

fore *everyone who has heard* and learned from the Father comes to Me." Thus, to hear God and be taught by God is, in essence, to experience an inward drawing toward the Lord Jesus. That is, this inward speaking is experienced as an attraction toward Christ. This inner drawing indicates His direct speaking to us.

I experienced this inward speaking when I first came to the Lord, although I did not realize it at the time. After hearing the gospel for the first time, there was a constant inner drawing in me toward Christ. This drawing expressed itself in my curiosity toward the Bible and church history. It also expressed itself through my interest in the girl who later became my wife. She spoke to me about the Lord in a way I had never heard before. The Lord was drawing me to Himself, and this drawing *was* His speaking to me.

The Greek word for draw is *helkuo* / ἐλκύνω, and may be properly understood as a gentle inner persuasion. It refers to something in you that attracts and persuades you toward the Lord and the things of the Lord. It is the same kind of experience spoken of in Jeremiah 31:3: "The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying: 'Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have *drawn* you.' " Thus, the manner of the Lord's speaking is that gentle persuasion of love that draws our hearts to Him.

The speaking of the Lord under the new covenant is an inward drawing resulting from a divine operation

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in our being. The drawing *is* His speaking. Even though we are sometimes indifferent to that inner drawing, it is still there in us. We can run away from it or we can nurture it. Whatever measure of drawing to the Lord we may have, it is deserving of our thanksgiving. We should say, “Thank You, Lord, for the desire that I find in myself for You.” Even a little bit of desire in us for the Lord should be considered His speaking.

His speaking manifests itself by an inward drawing. In other words, He does not normally speak with audible words, telling us what to do or not to do. Rather, He actually imparts into us the very substance and reality of His speaking. For example, if He is speaking to us about “willingness” in an area of our lives, He will incline our hearts and draw our hearts in that area. In Philippians 2:12-13 Paul makes this clear: ¹² “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ *for it is God who operates in you both the willing and the working* for His good pleasure.” God Himself operates within to produce the willingness and the working. This illustrates that understanding the Lord’s voice is related to understanding His drawing from within our hearts.

The Old Testament example of the Shulammitte maiden’s request to her bridegroom expresses the same kind of drawing spoken of in the New Testament. In Song of Songs 1:4 the maiden says, “Draw me; we will run after thee” (ASV). When the Lord draws us, we will run after Him. We can be sure that when we find within us that gentle inner drawing toward the Lord, that itself *is* the Lord’s speaking to us. By grace He works within us to impart the very reality of the words He speaks. When He calls us to Himself, He makes us feel an inward drawing toward Him, even as He declares in John 12:32: “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, *will draw all men to Myself.*”

The Lord’s voice is like an inner knowing

From the verses in John 10 that speak so clearly about the Lord’s voice, we observe that His voice in our experience is like an inner knowing. Verses 4-5 say, ⁴ “And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, *for they know his voice.* ⁵ Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, *for they do not know the voice of strang-*

ers.” Also, in verse 14 the Lord says, “I am the good shepherd; and *I know My sheep, and am known by My own.*” This inner knowing of the Lord’s voice is similar to experiencing an inner drawing, in that we are moved and touched from within. In our experience there is a deep inner consciousness and conviction. This is because the Lord’s voice is written into our very consciousness.

For example, when we received Christ into us, it was because we were convinced by this inner knowing that we should receive Him. Outwardly, we may have *heard* a preacher sharing the gospel, or we may have *read* a tract explaining to our mind the way of salvation. But inwardly we *knew* that receiving Christ was the right thing to do. This inner knowing to follow the Lord as our Shepherd is simply His voice speaking in our consciousness.

This inner knowing has a long history. It goes back to eternity past and stretches forward to eternity future. In John 10:3 the Lord says, “The sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep *by name* and leads them out.” We must see that the reason He can call His own sheep by name is because in eternity past we were given by the Father to the Son *by name*. He knows us by name. In fact, we were all personal gifts given by the Father to the Son. In John 10:27-29 the Lord says, ²⁷ “My sheep hear My voice, and *I know them*, and they follow Me. ²⁸ And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. ²⁹ *My Father, who has given them to Me*, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand.” These verses in John 10 (together with Hebrews 13:20-21, which tells us about the Lord being the great Shepherd of the sheep in the blood of an eternal covenant) show us something of the substance of our inner knowing of the Lord. Namely, that our inner knowing of His voice *today*, in time, is our response to the Father and the Son’s *eternal* knowing of us. Thus, we can confidently say that we know Him because He first knew us (cf. Gal. 4:9).

The Son willingly took each of us by name, and then in the eternal covenant He agreed to shepherd us all the way — out of eternity past, through time with all the problems of sin, the flesh, the world, and the devil, and into eternity future. Overcoming all obstacles, He would bring us through, fully conformed to His image.

Romans 8:16 further shows us how this inner knowing is a reality to us: “The Spirit Himself bears

witness with our spirit that we are children of God.” The Spirit witnessing with our spirit that we are children of God gives us an inner knowing and consciousness. This is His way of speaking to us in the most intimate and personal manner. Instead of hearing an outward voice, something apart from us, we have an inner consciousness of His abiding presence. This is how we understand the Lord’s voice.

The Lord’s voice is like an inner infusion and supply

The Lord’s voice under the new covenant comes as an inner infusion and supply. Galatians 3:21 says, “Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law.” God’s voice under the old covenant was indeed correct and proper in itself, but as an outward law it could not give life. It could not infuse and supply life. It could only tell you what to do. No doubt, the law given by Moses accurately defined God’s requirement, yet it could not supply life to carry it out. But John 1:17 says, “For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth [or, reality] came through Jesus Christ.” Grace and reality coming through Jesus Christ is different from an outward law being handed to us. Grace and reality is the Lord Himself in person coming to us to infuse His very life into our being.

The law was *given* but grace *came*. There is a big difference. For example, I can communicate with you in two ways: I can send you a letter or I can come in person to communicate with you. The law given by Moses is like receiving a communication by letter, but grace and reality coming through Jesus Christ is, in fact, receiving a communication from Christ Himself in person. When He comes in person, we receive direct infusion and supply. This supply is the new covenant way God speaks to us. His speaking to us is His simultaneous supply into us. Jesus said in John 6:63, “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. *The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.*” The very words themselves *are* spirit and life. Words and speaking mean infusion and supply.

Furthermore, this speaking is not merely an intermittent or sporadic speaking but a constant supply of life in our being. For example, we experience an inner infusion of love toward our relatives to pray for their

salvation. The love we feel for them is God’s way of speaking to us about them. God did not come and outwardly tell us to love our relatives and pray for them. He does not do it that way. Rather, He wells up within us with compassion and burden. The compassion and burden *are* the Lord’s voice, because His voice comes with the infusion and supply of what He wants us to do. Thus, as we learn to read the feelings within our heart, we are learning to hear the Lord’s voice.

Often, His voice comes like a little seed planted within our hearts, in the form of a thought or burden. If we would pay more attention to those burdens and nurture them by prayer, we would discover the voice of God in our daily life in an increasing way. On the contrary, if we consider His speaking as merely an objective, outward voice, we may miss the hundreds of times God desires to subjectively and inwardly fulfill something within us.

Paul refers to this inward teaching in 1 Thessalonians 4:9: “But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another.” The phrase “taught by God” in Greek is a compound word which literally means God-taught (*theodidaktos / θεοδιδάκτοϛ*). In other words, we are intuitively God-taught to love one another. According to verse 8, this inward God-kind of teaching is coming from a present and continuous supply of the Holy Spirit.

There is within us a speaking which is teaching us about our relationships with one another. However, the teaching comes in the form of an infusion of the Holy Spirit, rather than in the form of an outward demand. We are all God-taught. This indicates that we have His voice speaking in us about loving one another. John 6:45 says, “they shall *all* be taught by God,” and Hebrews 8:11 says that these taught ones include the least to the greatest of the saints. This tells us that we all have His voice and can experience the infusion and supply of His voice and speaking.

The Lord’s voice is like an inner inclination

The fact that the Lord’s voice infuses and supplies us with love for Him, godly desires, willingness to obey Him, and the ability to go along with Him reveals that His voice is like an inner inclination in our being. That

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Christ as a Shoot and a Branch

“There shall come forth a Shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a Branch from his roots will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him . . .” — Isaiah 11:1-2

Isaiah 11—12 presents to us a prophetic picture of the kingdom of Christ — a glorious kingdom that will last one thousand years and will extend to the whole earth. What a wonderful kingdom that will be! As Isaiah says, “The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (11:9). Christ Himself will be “the banner,” the point of gathering (11:10). He will be the focus and centrality of the kingdom. His resting place, His throne, “shall be glory” (11:10, lit.). In fact, the whole earth shall be full of His glory! (6:3).

Further, Isaiah tells us that in the kingdom of God, *righteousness* will prevail. That is, Christ the King shall judge righteously and decide all matters with equity (11:3-5). Also, in the kingdom, *peace* will pervade all relationships. The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra’s hole. In other words, the animosity that is within fallen nature will be removed. Everything that devours, hurts, and destroys others will be annulled. Moreover, all the enmity that exists between men shall be abolished and be replaced by the peace of Christ (11:11-16). And finally, in the kingdom, *joy* shall permeate the atmosphere. It says that with joy we will draw water out of the wells of salvation. We will praise the Lord, call upon His name, declare His deeds, and make mention that His name is exalted. We will sing and cry aloud and shout! (12:1-6). What a kingdom! This is a kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17).

Just prior to these two chapters that depict the kingdom of Christ, Isaiah describes the destruction of the kingdoms of this world, which are represented by the powerful kingdom of Assyria (10:5-34). These kingdoms that are powerful and of high stature, and that are so haughty and proud, will be destroyed by “the Mighty One.” Like a forest of high trees, they will be cut down and humbled. Of course, “the Mighty One” is none other than Jesus Christ. It is Christ who utterly defeats the kingdoms of this world (Rev. 11:15; 19:11-21). He is the Rock that is hewn out of the mountain and

smashes these kingdoms and becomes a great mountain that fills the whole earth (Dan. 2:34-35, 44-45). And so, as we are introduced to the kingdom of God at the beginning of Isaiah 11, we anticipate seeing Christ as the King. We anticipate seeing the One who defeated all the powerful kingdoms of the world and has brought in the kingdom of God. And indeed we do. Chapter 11 opens by revealing the King of the kingdom of God. Yet, the picture that portrays Him is not what we might expect. We would expect to see a picture of Christ that exemplifies His great power and splendor, that conveys the glorious strength with which He defeated the powerful kingdoms of the world. But what do we see? We see a shoot sprouting out of a stump! We see a branch growing out of its roots and bearing fruit! As Isaiah says, “There shall come forth a Shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a Branch from his roots will bear fruit” (11:1).

What does this mean? And why does the Spirit convey such a picture of Christ? We must realize that this revelation of Christ as a Shoot and a Branch discloses to us the very nature of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is absolutely different from the kingdoms of the world. They are of radically different natures, and they operate under completely different premises. The operation of the kingdoms of the world is based on pride, position, power, and self-exaltation. Men compete with other men to scratch their way to the top. They step on others and often compromise principles to promote themselves. To be higher than others, to “lord it over others,” is the goal (Matt. 20:25-26). But the Lord told Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36). In other words, His kingdom is of a completely different nature from those of the world. This is a matter that His disciples had trouble grasping, even up to the time of His crucifixion. In fact, they argued with each other as to who was the greatest among them and who would sit next to Jesus in the kingdom (Matt. 20:24-28; Mark 9:33-37; Luke 22:24-30). The Lord had to reprove them for this, declaring that the Gentiles operate in that way, but “it shall not be so among you.”

The nature of the kingdom of God

What then is the nature of the kingdom of God? And what does the picture of the Shoot and the Branch convey to us? By the time Isaiah wrote this prophetic word about the coming kingdom, the throne of David had been humiliated for many years. Though at one

time it had been a great tree, all that now remained was a stump — the stump of Jesse. Of course, Jesse was David's father. Hence, the stump of Jesse refers to the fact that the glorious kingdom that had been raised up by his son David and his grandson Solomon was now reduced to the humiliated state of a stump. And any prospects for future glory were less than encouraging. However, Isaiah reveals to us a wonderful truth — that a Shoot would come forth out of that humbled stump.

This Shoot coming forth refers to the incarnation of Christ. Though the stump was seemingly dead for so many centuries, one day a Shoot, a little twig, came forth. A Child was born. Life — the divine life — was made flesh and was manifested (1 John 1:1-3). Power and position were not manifested. Royalty and splendor were not manifested. Rather, life was manifested. A Shoot of life came forth. And this life came forth in a humbled form. Though indeed He was the true King of the Jews, though He was the great High Priest over the house of God, though He was the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the living God — He came in a humbled form (Phil. 2:5-8). He was born of a poor family and raised in a despised region, and He assumed no outward position. He was the Shoot of life that sprang up out of the humbled stump of Jesse.

Then this Shoot deepened its roots and became a Branch. That is, life grew and expanded. It branched out and bore fruit (Isa. 11:1). This refers to the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Throughout His 33 1/2 years of human life, Jesus lived out the divine life. As a man, He lived dependent on the Father (John 8:28-29). He learned obedience through the things that He suffered (Heb. 5:8). He was one with the Spirit and lived in the supply and power of the Spirit. Isaiah says, "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him" (11:2). In other words, Jesus was in the realm of life and the Spirit. He was not in the realm of promoting Himself, or of organizing a movement to overthrow the earthly kingdoms. He had absolutely no interest in that. He simply lived the divine life. He manifested the life of God. He moved in the Spirit and bore fruit. And as He lived such a life, He was establishing His kingdom. Kingdom authority followed Him wherever He went. Demons obeyed His command. The most incurable of sicknesses were healed at His word. The dead were raised at His bidding. Even the forces of nature submitted to His rebuke. Why? Because He was living out the life of God. The small Shoot out of the humbled stump took root and grew and became a Branch that expanded and

bore abundant fruit. And this Branch is King! He is the King of the kingdom of God who defeats every other power in the universe, whether on earth or in heaven.

The resurrection of Christ

Finally, Jesus was crucified. Satan attempted to extinguish this man, to destroy the One who was manifesting the life of God and thus disrupting his own dark kingdom. We know that the ultimate power and weapon that Satan possessed in his arsenal was death. Death was a power that Satan held over every man. Indeed, Satan held the controlling keys of death and of Hades. But when this man Jesus died, everything changed. Up to this point, Satan had been successful in holding men in his grip of death and Hades. But the man Jesus could not be held (Acts 2:24). The chains of death could not hold resurrection life! After three days, God raised Him from the dead. Jesus walked out of death, and by so doing "destroyed him who had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. 2:14). Not only so — Jesus took from Satan the keys of death and of Hades. When the resurrected Christ appeared to the apostle John on the isle of Patmos, He said to him, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades" (Rev. 1:17-18). The apostle Paul tells us that at the cross all the fallen angels, all the evil powers of darkness, were defeated and stripped off. Jesus triumphed over them and they were openly put to shame (Col. 2:15).

What a victory! Resurrection life utterly defeated the kingdom of Satan. And now Jesus Christ is "the living One." Indeed, He is reigning in life. This Branch is now King of kings and Lord of lords. He is raised, exalted, and seated on the throne of God, and everything is subjected under His feet (Eph. 1:19-22). But the story does not end here. On the day of Pentecost, the Spirit was poured out. The Spirit of Christ came to indwell all His believers. And now this life is in us. In fact, the Branch is living in us. And He is branching out in us. He is growing and bearing fruit. And as He lives and grows in us, He is establishing His kingdom in us and on the earth.*

— Kirk Eland

* In the next issue of *the Christian*, we will continue to fellowship how Christ "branches out" in us.

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is, He puts His inclinations into us. This is the nature of His speaking. It is not hearing an audible voice; neither is it waiting for a vision; nor is it reading some words that appear before our eyes in a ticker-tape fashion. Rather, the normal voice of the Son speaking in us comes as a supplied feeling of life written into our consciousness. This feeling is an inner inclination or tendency. It may even be considered as an inner bias or disposition. It is definitely the bent and leaning of our mind, emotion, and will.

For example, there may be an inclination or desire within you to spend more time with the Lord. You have a leaning in that direction. It is not an overpowering feeling; nevertheless you seem to be bent in the direction of desiring more time in your daily life to spend with the Lord. That inclination is the voice of the Son of God, not speaking audibly in your ears, but speaking in your inner consciousness by an infused tendency. The tendency carries with it a fresh supply of grace. Thus, whenever you go along with that tendency and obey it, you discover that the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ is present there with you, backing up that tendency with fresh and available grace.

Paul mentions this inner inclination in Romans 8:5-6: ⁵ “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For to be carnally *minded* is death, but to be spiritually *minded* is life and peace.” The American Standard Version translates verse 6, “For the *mind* of the flesh is death; but the *mind* of the Spirit is life and peace.” The Concordant Literal New Testament translates it, “For the *disposition* of the flesh is death, yet the *disposition* of the spirit is life and peace.” The Emphasized Bible by Rotherham translates the same verse, “For *what is preferred* by the flesh is death, whereas *what is preferred* by the spirit is life and peace.” All of these translations attempt to capture the depth of the Greek word *phronema*/φρόνημα used here by Paul.

This New Testament word *phronema*, according to the Greek lexicons, means the *bent or direction of the mind, emotions, and will* . In other words, it refers to the inclination of all the faculties of our inner being. Romans 8:6 tells us that the very source of this bent and inclination is the Spirit. It is the Spirit that produces a Spirit-inclined disposition in us that registers a consciousness of “life and peace.” In fact, this is one of the

major things the Spirit accomplishes in us — inclining our inner being toward the things of God.

When we experience these inclinations toward God and the things of God, it causes us to worship Him because we realize that the very thing He is inclining us to, He Himself does. It is all grace! For example, He wants us to love Him, so He Himself imparts into us the love whereby we can love Him. We discover that the love of God is something poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5). Another inclination that we discover in our experience is a desire to share Christ with others. We gradually begin to realize that the inclination itself *is* the Lord’s voice in us, prompting us to preach the gospel. There are also the times when we may wake up in the morning with a few words of a hymn or spiritual song. We are then inclined to go to our hymnal to find the rest of the words to that song. When we do, we are face to face with God’s specific words or speaking to us for that day. How many times have you been inwardly directed to a devotional book such as *Daily Light*, only to find the word, the line, or the verse that met your need at that moment?

To hear the sweet sound of the Lord’s voice in our daily life we need to look for and follow the Spirit-produced inclinations. Our following these inclinations will issue in the sense of life and peace within. Again, under the new covenant His speaking does not normally come to us as an audible voice, but it comes in the line of a verse, in the words of a song, in the fellowship with another member of the Body, in a message we heard from the Word, or in the growing burden we feel in our hearts. As we open ourselves to live out of the source of the Spirit (Rom. 8:4-5), we will increasingly be made aware of our heart’s inclinations (v. 6). It is in those inclinations that we will find the Lord’s voice for our daily life.

***The Lord’s voice is imparted and
written upon our inward parts***

Further truth concerning the Lord’s voice is found in Hebrews 8:10-11: ¹⁰ “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will impart My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ¹¹ None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, ‘Know the

Lord,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them." These two verses are a quotation from Jeremiah 31:33-34. Again, the uniqueness of the new covenant is in the imparting of His laws into our mind and the actual inscribing of them on our heart. This shows that the voice of the Lord is in our thoughts and in our heart. His voice is in our desires, in our feelings, in that inner operation of being prompted with an impulse concerning something. His voice is also in the inclination of our will. The Lord's voice under the new covenant is directly present within the heart of every believer. This is the nature of His speaking.

Sometimes the Lord's voice comes in the form of a question, such as, What are you doing here? or, Where are you going? For example, one day the prophet Elijah was sulking because Jezebel was seeking his life (1 Kings 19:2). Yes, Elijah was truly a mighty man of God. He had already caused fire from heaven to come down and consume an offering, thus exposing the falseness of the prophets of Baal and exonerating and vindicating the living God (1 Kings 18:19-39). But when he heard the report that Jezebel wanted to kill him, he ran for his life. Eventually, his flight ended with his hiding in a cave.

In 1 Kings 19:9-13, we read the details of the story of Elijah's encounter with the Lord's voice: ⁹ "And there he went into a cave, and spent the night in that place; and behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and He said to him, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' ¹⁰ So he said, 'I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life.' ¹¹ Then He said, 'Go out, and stand on the mountain before the LORD.' And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; ¹² and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. ¹³ So it was, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. And suddenly a voice came to him, and said, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?'" This story illustrates how the Lord is in the still small voice. The original Hebrew words mean "a delicate whispering voice." The Lord was in that whisper. God's speaking was in that still

small voice, and it was in the form of a question, "What are you doing here?"

Maybe you have found yourself in "a cave" at some time. Perhaps you went to the cave of a movie theater, and while you were watching all the defiling things on the screen, there arose a consciousness within you in the form of a question, "What are you doing here?" You can be sure that that was God talking to you. That is the way His voice speaks — right inside of you.

In Genesis 3, God approached Adam in the same way. After Adam had hidden himself from the presence of the Lord, God came to him asking the question, "Where are you?" Of course, God already knew where Adam was, but He still needed to ask *him* the question.

Sometimes in our lives, when we are living for vanity — when we are in our own little world with our own self-centered goals and aims — there comes a consciousness within us with words that form in our own thoughts saying, "Where am I? What am I doing with my life? Where will my life end up?" It may seem like our own mind talking, but we must realize that God's voice comes to us as He is writing it into our consciousness — into our own thoughts and heart. God is talking to us through our own consciousness. This way of speaking is according to the new covenant. He is not merely talking to us, but He is infusing and supplying into us the very thing He is speaking about.

We probably do not realize how much of the voice of the Lord we, as believers, actually have in our daily life. For example, you may remember someone during the day. Perhaps as you are washing the dishes, you think about that person. Actually it is the Lord speaking to you, putting that person on your heart so that you would pray for him or give him a phone call.

In his letters to the churches and to individuals, Paul describes his experiences of having the Lord's speaking. In 2 Timothy 1:3-5 Paul says, ³ "I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I *remember* you in my prayers night and day, ⁴ greatly desiring to see you, *remembering* your tears, that I may be filled with joy, ⁵ when I call to *remembrance* the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also." Paul illustrates in these verses that the Lord's voice speaking to him is in and through his thoughts. It is in the normal

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avenues and channels of his being. This corresponds to God's new covenant way of imparting His laws into our mind and inscribing them upon our heart.

When we understand this new covenant way of God's speaking, we must confess that we all have heard more of His voice in our daily life than we realized. For example, God's speaking has come to us many times in the form of desires within us. We may have a desire to go to the church meeting. That very desire within us is God's speaking in the form of an inclination inscribed on our heart. Thus, we can see how simple and intimate is the Lord's voice *to* us and *in* us under the new covenant.

The Lord's voice comes through our environment

Often in our experience the Lord's voice in us encounters a deaf or indifferent ear. When this occurs, the Lord has a way to turn up the volume of His speaking. According to the Scriptures, His way is to use our environment and circumstances to intensify His inner speaking. This is the spiritual principle of discipline and chastisement in the lives of all God's children (cf. Heb. 12:5-9). The effect that God's discipline has on our ability to hear the Lord's voice is exemplified in Isaiah 30:20-21: ²⁰ "And though the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore, but your eyes shall see your teachers. ²¹ Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way, walk in it,' whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left."

When the Lord gives us the bread of *adversity* and the water of *affliction*, He is doing so in order to get our attention, that we may hear His voice. Adversity and affliction are described as teachers that are not hidden in a corner anymore. Indeed, our eyes will see our teachers. These teachers are different from brothers and sisters giving us outward instructions. They are like personal tutors that are able to get our attention so that we will listen to the Lord. They are sent by God when all else seems to fail. Under God's sovereignty, the environments of adversity and affliction are used by Him to attain one end — our hearing of the Lord's voice.

The effectiveness of environmental discipline in our lives is evidenced by the fact that we eventually do hear a voice behind us saying, "This is the way, walk in it," when we turn to the right or when we turn to the left. This voice keeps us on the straight and narrow way of

experiencing Christ. Our tendency is to be side-tracked, turning aside either to the right or to the left. The right and left represent evil, the flesh, the world, or our own independent way (cf. Prov. 4:23-27). If we have learned from our teachers of adversity and affliction, when we are again tempted to turn off the road to the right or left, *we will hear* the Lord speaking through our consciousness, "This is the way (Christ), walk in it (Him)" (cf. Col. 2:6). All of God's discipline in our lives has this one goal — that we would hear the Lord's voice and follow Him.

May the Holy Spirit cause us all to become warm within so that we all can say, "Lord, thank You that Your voice is so intimate in me all day long." Begin thanking Him for His voice even though you have not obeyed it. Simply say, "Thank You for speaking. Thank You for this consciousness. Thank You, Lord, that You have been speaking in me even though I did not listen." As we begin in this way to enjoy Him and partake of Him, we will find within us godly desires, a Spirit-wrought willingness, and inclinations toward the things of God. All of this comes from God Himself operating in our being. By learning to follow this inner operation, we become, in reality, His sheep who hear His voice and follow Him in daily life. This is the pathway to God's eternal purpose of conforming us to the image of Christ.*

— Bill Freeman

* This article is taken from *Hearing the Lord's Voice*. This book of 118 pages may be ordered for \$4.00 postpaid from: **Ministry Publications**, P.O. Box 12222, Scottsdale, AZ 85267 • Phone: (602) 948-4050 • Fax: (602) 922-1338.

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