

Knowing The Heart Of God And Listening To His Voice

"Be still and know I am God. I will be exalted among the nations and in the earth" (Psalm 46:10).

"I will give them a heart to know I am God. They will be My people and I will be their God" (Jeremiah 24:7).

God is more delighted when we obey Him than when we give any type of sacrifice. 'Does God have great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, more than you obeying the voice of God? Behold, to obey God is better than sacrifice and to listen to Him is better than the fat of rams, for rebellion is as serious as the sin of witchcraft and stubbornness is as evil as idolatry and teraphim (seeking the future similar to seeking horoscopes)' (1 Samuel 15:22 & 23). 'Guard your steps (behaviour) when you go to the house of God, for to draw near to listen (to the Word of God) is better than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know they do evil' (Ecclesiastes 5:1).

God wants our obedience more than anything else we may do in His service. It was disobedience that led to the downfall of Adam and because of his disobedience, all mankind was cursed. After that, apart from a few righteous individuals like Enoch, the whole world became disobedient and rebellious and remains that way. Only through accepting the cross and blood of Jesus can we find our way back to God, be reconciled and learn obedience. The only way we can obey the Lord is to know what He wants us to do, and the only way we can find out what He wants is by listening to His subtle voice. After Moses had an encounter with God via the burning bush, he became a good listener and thoroughly obedient, unlike most of the children of Israel.

When Moses became a good listener, God gave him a difficult task. 'Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian. He led the flock to the back of the wilderness and came to Horeb, God's mountain. The Angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked and behold, the bush burned with fire but was not consumed. Moses said, "I will turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt."

4. When the Lord saw Moses had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the midst of the bush, "Moses! Moses!"

He answered, "Here I am."

5. God said, "Do not come close. Take your sandals off of your feet for the place where you stand is holy ground. I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob."

Moses hid his face for he was afraid to look at God.

7. God said, "I have seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey ... The cry of the children of Israel has come to Me. I have seen the way the Egyptians oppress them. Come and I will send you to Pharaoh so you may bring forth My people, the children of Israel out of Egypt" (Exodus 3:1 to 10).

The children of Israel cried out to God to save them from slavery, then after they had left Egypt, they rebelled. The rebellion of the Israelites was beyond the grace of God. They were full of lust and idolatry. The Bible says they had 'broken loose' (Exodus 32:25). They worshipped gold, they danced, worshipped idols, played up and followed their worldly desires. Only the tribe of the Levites stood up for righteousness and remained holy (Exodus 32:26). The Lord gave Moses the difficult task of leading the Israelites into the promised land but with that direction, God added a terrifying statement. 'God said, "Depart, go up from here, you and the people you have brought out of the land of Egypt to the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob saying, 'I will give it to your descendents ... to a land flowing with milk and honey', but I will not go up in the midst of you, for you are a stiff-necked people, lest I consume you in the way." When the people heard this evil news they mourned. God said to Moses, "Tell the children of Israel, 'You are a stiff-necked people. If I were to go up into your midst for one moment, I would consume you'" (Exodus 33:1 to 5). The Lord withdrew His presence from the Hebrews because they refused to listen to Him and obey Him. That generation never made it into the promised land. They all died except for Joshua and Caleb. They all continued to move toward the promised land under the covering of the holy cloud and fire of the Holy Spirit, but died along the way. Their sin made them lose their inheritance and their salvation. The promised land is an allegory of heaven. Nothing could be worse than to realise God had withdrawn His presence.

Like the children of Israel, millions of Christians are moving on towards heaven (the promised land) but many will fall away from God along the way, enticed by sin or overcome by difficult circumstances. Many people believe in God but never commit themselves to Him. They often become religious without ever knowing Him intimately. They are potentially saved yet uncommitted. They are Christians but are not genuine disciples. See what Jesus says to all those Christians who do not listen to God and obey His commands. "Every tree (Christian) that does not grow good fruit is cut down and thrown into the (lake of) fire. By their fruits (behaviour) you (genuine disciples) will know them. Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven but only those who do the will of My Father Who is in heaven. Many will tell Me in

that (Judgement) day, 'Lord, Lord, we prophesied in Your name, in Your name we cast out demons and in Your name we did many mighty works.' Then I will tell them, 'I never knew you. Depart from Me, you who work iniquity.' Everyone who hears (listens) to these words of Mine and does them (obeys), I will liken them to a wise man who built his house on a rock (the Rock is Jesus)" (Matthew 7:19 to 24). 'Depart from Me you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels' (Matthew 25:41).

Many can quote the Bible by chapter and verse without understanding the reality of knowing the very heart of God wrote those words for us, to lead and guide us. 'Every Scripture is God-breathed (inspired by God) and profitable for teaching, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness, so the man (and woman) of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work' (2 Timothy 3:16 & 17). The Bible is a living entity, not just a book. Those Christians who do not reveal the Lord in their behaviour, who are not holy, who do not understand why conviction of sin and repentance is important to maintain our relationship with God, are the people who may be rejected. Those people know the actions of God but they cannot comprehend God's ways. Moses prayed for the Lord to reveal His glory, His presence and His ways so he could know Him in a deeper level and by asking for that, Moses had an amazing encounter with God very few people have ever experienced.

'God spoke to Moses face to face as a man speaks to his friend ... Moses asked, "If I have found favour in Your sight, please show me Your ways so I may know You, so I may find favour in Your sight" ... God said, "My presence will go with you and I will give you rest ... I will do this thing you have asked, for you have found favour in My sight and I know you by name." Moses asked, "Please show me your glory." ... God said, "Behold, there is a place by Me and you will stand on the rock (signifying Jesus). While My glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft of the rock and will cover you with My hand until I have passed by then I will take away My hand and you will see My back but My face will not be seen" (Exodus 33:11 to 23). If we want to find favour in the sight of God, we need to know Him on a deeper level and discover His ways, not just His acts. What Moses wanted was the consistent presence of God, and that is also what we need. We need to seek Him for ourselves and unless we put the effort into seeking His ways, we will not learn to know Him intimately. Salvation is solely by the grace, mercy, favour and kindness of God and we are able to pursue the presence of the Holy Spirit through prayer, something mankind could not do until Jesus came, died, was resurrected then sent the Holy Spirit to us (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7). After we are saved, God expects us to produce the fruit of good works by listening to His direction and obeying His instructions. To be able to listen and obey, we need to enter into His presence and learn of Him through individual worship and prayer.

We cannot hold onto earthly possessions and expect to grow in God. He wants us to put Him first in every area of our lives. We need to have the attitude Moses and the Apostles had. Moses left Midian where he was happy and content working for his father-in-law, to go and serve the Lord (Exodus 2:21). The Apostles gave everything up to follow Jesus. 'Behold, we have left everything and followed You' (Matthew 19:27; Mark 10:28; Luke 18:28). 'I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus my Lord, for Whom I suffered the loss of all things and count them nothing but rubbish so I may gain the Messiah and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own, that which is of the law, but righteousness through faith in Jesus, the righteousness from God by faith so I may know Him, the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, becoming conformed to His death, if by any means I may attain to the resurrection from the dead' (Philippians 3:8 to 11).

If we refuse to listen to the voice of God so He can instruct us according to His will, which would lead us to obedience, He might cast the disobedient person aside. 'My God will cast them away because they did not listen to Him, and they will be wanderers (lost) among the nations' (Hosea 9:17). Just as the Lord first spoke to Moses atop Mount Horeb, so too the Lord spoke to Elijah atop Mount Horeb. Just as the Lord passed right by Moses to reveal His glory, so too the Lord passed right by Elijah. 'God said, "Go forth and stand on the mountain before the Lord." Behold, the Lord passed by and a mighty wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before God, but God was not in the wind. After the wind, came an earthquake but God was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake, came a fire but God was not in the fire. After the fire, came a still small voice. When Elijah heard it he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out, and stood in the entrance of the cave. Behold, then came a Voice that asked, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"' (1 Kings 19:11 to 13).

Amazingly, Elijah was not afraid of the stormy wind, the earthquake or the fire. Imagine if that happened to any of us. We would be terrified. Moses was not frightened when God spoke to him when he was alone up the mountain. Elijah showed great reverence to God by covering his face with the mantle when he heard the voice of God, before he went to the entrance of the cave to meet with Him. Notice when the Lord spoke to Elijah, He referred to the prophet by name. God knew exactly why Elijah was in the cave, so to ask him why he was there, was a very intimate, tender and paternal moment. It was then the Lord gave Elijah the instructions to anoint Hazael as king of Syria, Jehu as king of Israel and Elisha to be his assistant and successor (1 Kings 19:15 & 16). Elijah listened to and obeyed the voice of God. The Lord does not speak to us in storms, earthquakes and fire but He does speak to our heart in a tiny, subtle voice, prompting us to

take action. It is up to us to listen and obey. 'When you turn to the right hand and when you turn to the left, your ears will hear a Voice behind you saying, "This is the way. Walk in it" (Isaiah 30:21).

People who harden their hearts and refuse to listen to God, will end up deluded and full of fear. 'When I called, you did not answer. When I spoke, you did not listen but you did what was evil in My eyes and chose what I did not delight in' (Isaiah 65:12). 'I will choose their delusions and will bring their fears on them because when I called, none did answer. When I spoke they did not listen but they did what was evil in My eyes and chose things in which I did not delight' (Isaiah 66:4). To know what God delights in, we need to know His heartfelt desires. We need to go into a quiet place and spend a lot of time with Him in His presence and much time studying the Bible so we can live according to the Word of God. We need to be able to hear His tiny Voice. God does not impose His will onto us – He wants willing participants. He wants people who want to know Him intimately, who want to do His will, who want to be with Him, who want to listen to His every word, who want to be in tune with Him so we can walk together, work together, increase the Kingdom of God together and at the end of it all, to share heaven, the ultimate promised land, together. 'Behold, God's dwelling is with people and He will dwell with them. They will be His people and God Himself will be with them as their God' (Revelation 21:3).

Amen and God bless you.

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