

Prayer: Personal Holiness

There is a danger to looking to someone we believe has more Light than we have, but that person may have only a little more Light and may in fact be wrong. We need to look to Jesus for guidance, not other people because the Lord wants to teach us individually. We need to make a conscious decision to ask the Holy Spirit for help, because we can't be holy or righteous by ourselves. He gives us the power to overcome sin.

If we are to live a continuously righteous life, we need to continually confess sin and be forgiven. We must try to resist the law of sin in our bodies and we will not win this struggle immediately. The Lord comes to us in love and reminds us that the death on the cross was enough. If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive them. See 1 John 1:9.

What God requires is that we are honest with ourselves, with others and with Him when we confess. Being honest with others doesn't mean we tell them all about every sin, but it does mean we are not afraid to talk about anything. See James 5:16. That is the position of one who is walking in holiness. Most people who walk in holiness now, didn't always walk in holiness, but often walked in a lot sin before becoming holy. Some of those sins are the kind you want to keep in closets. We don't put our skeletons on display, but we are not afraid of them anymore because God delivers us from those things. We have to do that for our own benefit, put those things behind us and forget them. See Philippians 3:13.

When you take a skeleton out of a cupboard it begins to get 'flesh and bones' and it begins to take on an appearance; as you look at it you begin to see yourself as a sinner again, not as one who has been forgiven. Condemnation of self can cause us to stumble, so let the past go and receive forgiveness. See Romans 8:1.

Does God speak to us? Throughout the scriptures He shows us that He does. Speaking in the context of holiness and sanctification, prayer is of the greatest value in promoting holiness within us. We need to learn to listen to God as well as speak to Him. Listening prayer is learned and from scripture it is clear that God is a speaking God. One passage that deals with it is Isaiah 50:4 & 5 which is the Son speaking of the Father. 'The Servant of the Lord (Jesus) says, "The Lord God (Father) has given Me (Jesus) the tongue of a disciple and of one who is taught, that I (Jesus) should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary. He (Father) wakens Me (Jesus) morning by morning. He (Father) wakens My (Jesus') ear to hear as a disciple. The Lord (Father) has opened My (Jesus') ear, and I (Jesus) have not been rebellious or turned backward.'

This dialogue is God the father speaking with His Son, Jesus, before Jesus was born on earth, but as we know, we can also have this kind of relationship with the God the father. Jesus Himself said, "I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God." Through accepting the blood of Jesus, we can form an intimate, close and loving relationship with our Father.

This passage of scripture is Isaiah prophesying about our Lord Jesus Christ, and you can prophesy without knowing you are prophesying. Isaiah was speaking of a personal experience, but in God's wonderful way, Isaiah was also speaking of the coming Lord Jesus as well. Jesus Himself confirmed Isaiah was speaking of Him. Just as Jesus had, we are also to have a special tongue.

What kind of tongue is it and what does it do? It could be called the tongue of the learned, people who know a lot, people who are taught of the Lord. What does it do? It changes people, lifts those who are weary, encourages, strengthens and sustains the weary. It is a tongue that God can give all of us, but how can we get that tongue? By having a special ear to hear what God is saying to those, who are ready to listen. God can open the 'ear' of our hearts; an inner 'ear' that God Himself has awakened. Isaiah had it, Jesus had it, many people today have it. It is for everybody who has asked the Holy Spirit to open their ears.

Our God is a communicating God. Many people think God has said all He intends to say in His book, but that is not really strictly true. It is true that the Bible is sufficient but God still speaks to us as individuals, which must always line up with scripture. God never, ever contradicts His own word. All scripture is inspired by God and is God-breathed. See 2 Timothy 3:16. The Holy Spirit will reveal to you what God wants you to know and receive. The whole Bible is spiritually discerned, and can only be discerned by the grace of the Holy Spirit, otherwise it will make no sense at all. The more we read, the more we learn about the leading and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the more God's word will grow in us. If you want to have the tongue, you have to have the ear. For example, God might say "Go over and speak to that person about Me," but that is not in the Bible. However to confirm it is the voice of God, we read in the Bible that we must be witnesses and blessed is the feet of him who brings good news of the gospel. See Isaiah 52:7.

Another example is when Philip was told, "Rise and proceed southward at midday on the road that runs from Jerusalem down to Gaza." See Acts 8:26.

The Holy Spirit gives promptings from a communicating God. He speaks, He creates and He has designed us for fellowship with Him. Fellowship is a two way deal just like any conversation. It's not only us praying to God all the time but it's Him speaking back to us. The reason for the opened ear, is to receive orders and instructions and sometimes even rebukes for sin. We have to have not only an open ear, but also an obedient will. We have to obey God even if sometimes we are asked to do something we don't want to do. We need a willingness to do what is sometimes frightening. This has to do with the holiness and trust within us. God searches the heart. Sometimes what God asks us to do, may meet with opposition by weaker or younger Christians. Jesus made it very clear that we would suffer persecutions, and sometimes it comes from family, natural or spiritual. If they persecuted Jesus, they will persecute you. See John 15:20. All those who live a Godly life in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. You must expect to be persecuted to some degree. See 2 Timothy 3:12.

The more God-like you become, the more non Christian friends you may lose, and hopefully the more Christian friends you will gain. This is hard, but it is God's way. Listening to God involves hearing things you sometimes don't like. To know this is to know the triumph in a Godly life and to know the anointing in one's life. We need the attitude Jesus had in Isaiah 50:7, 8 & 9. 'For the Lord God helps Me; therefore I have not been ashamed. I have set My face like a flint and I know that I shall not be put to shame. He (God) is near. He Who declares Me in the right. Who will contend with Me? Let us stand forth together! Who is My accuser? Let him come near to Me. Behold, the Lord will help Me; who is he that will condemn Me? The moth will eat them up'.

This is the experience of those who obey; the Lord will help them. When God speaks to us, it can be one of several different ways. Sometimes the Lord speaks through His Word as we read; when suddenly a passage stands out. Sometimes He speaks directly to our hearts; other times He speaks through people, through dreams, visions, prophecy, an angel or in an audible voice. Sometimes sin will 'block' our 'ears'. If that happens, the Lord will bring the sin to our attention, and with our obedience and confession, will deliver us and we will be able to hear once again. Obedience isn't always pleasant but it is always possible, and with deliverance comes release and freedom. In order to hear from the Lord you have to wait on Him to speak, and you have to be disciplined in your prayer life. You have to learn to discern the voice of the Holy Spirit. You have to distinguish between God's voice, your own thoughts and desires, and sometimes even to voice of evil. The only way you can develop this skill, is by asking the Holy Spirit to help you hear, and then by practicing. You have to learn by listening properly. If God gives you an order you must ask Him to confirm it, usually through the Word but sometimes by someone who is also obedient. The Word of God must be used according to His will.

For example, if a woman uses the Word of God to control her family, and not in a loving way, she is using the Word incorrectly. It can be almost akin to witchcraft if the controlling is too extreme. God's

power is not be used to control anyone. Listening to God takes time. We should spend equal amounts of time praying, reading the Word, worshiping and listening. Repentance is a matter of the heart and we need to be able to hear God so He can touch on sin and bring us to repentance. Listening that leads to repentance can change a life, so be persistent because God is faithful and He will teach you. We must learn to be silent and still before Him. We all need wisdom to use the word of God correctly.

Be focused on the Lord Himself. He is present always by His spirit Who dwells within. To listen effectively you must be alone, relaxed, quiet and be in a place where you are able to concentrate on the Lord. Concentrate on His love, His presence and His peace. You will find as you grow in God, that 30 minutes is not enough time and you will increase your time spent in His presence. The time spend listening to God will reveal how much you value hearing from Him.

Ask yourself these questions. Is hearing from God more important to you than hearing the news on a radio? Is it more important than watching TV? Is it more important than housework? Is it more important than reading the newspaper or magazines? Is it more important than overtime? Is it more important than food? We need a place, we need time and we need determination. We need to assess in our minds; is this important to me or not?

In reality, listening is essential. It is a must. We have to realise and accept it before we can freely do it. Sometimes hearing from God is not easy and at time can be difficult. Listening to and hearing God is scriptural. Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice." See John 10:27.

We need to pay heed, but to pay heed we need to first hear. Sheep hear but the lambs do not. Lambs pay heed to the voice of the ewe. Lambs hear the voice of the shepherd but pay heed to the ewe. The eastern shepherd calls his sheep and they obey. He leads the flock and goes before the flock and they follow him and he calls them by name. He knows His individual sheep by name. Jesus is this kind of shepherd. "My sheep hear My voice, I know them and they follow Me." John 10:4.

Contemplation is the time when the Lord especially comes through our spiritual ears. The presence of the Lord in a close and intimate way is a joyful and life changing experience. During those time we can only consider His wonder, power and our relationship and worship; sometimes silently. Some people give their lives over to that intimate closeness with God. God is omnipresent, sustaining the earth, mankind and the whole universe and is present when we ask the Holy Spirit to come. It is written: Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. (James 4:8) And when it happens, you know it happens.

If you have heard of being in the presence of the Lord, have not experienced it for yourself, but are determined that you will come to that place to enjoy His presence, first you must repent of any sin that may be hindering you, verbally (to the Lord) forgive all who have wronged you, ask His forgiveness, worship and pray for a while and concentrate wholly on God. Ask Him to speak to you and when He does you will know. Never give way to discouragement. Sometimes it can be tough learning to hear the Lord, but if you persevere, He will meet with you and it will be a life changing experience. Once you begin to spend time in His lovely presence, you will become hooked and you won't want to stop. You may actually miss Him if you don't have a daily time with the Lord. Seek the Lord while He may be found. See Isaiah 55:6.

Amen and God bless you.

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