

He Is the God of the Valley

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Have you ever found yourself in a conversation or reading a page when, at some point, you were startled to realize that you had no idea what was being said? If someone were to ask you, you would be dumb struck! Though you remember hearing sounds or seeing familiar words on a page, because of a distraction or preoccupation, you were unable to hear the message.

Occasionally, this preoccupation is due to some overwhelming situation you are dealing with. More often, it is simply the result of undisciplined thinking. In either case, when the mind is not quiet, there is no ability to concentrate.

During the trials that every one of us will face, there is no greater need than to hear the words of the Lord.

When you find yourself in a valley, *listen*. Hear Him speak: "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10a).

Chapter One
HEARING, KNOWING,
AND FOLLOWING

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. *To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out*” (John 10:1-3).

I want you to see four things about John 10:3. First, the Holy Spirit (Who is the porter) opens the door. Second, the sheep hear the Shepherd’s voice. Third, the Shepherd “calleth his own sheep by name.” And fourth, He leads them out.

Verse 16 says, “And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.”

Then in verse 27: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”

Three times in John chapter 10 (verses 3, 16, and 27), the Word of God records that God’s sheep hear the Shepherd’s voice. In verses 3 and 27, the Greek word for “hear” (*akouo*) is in the present tense, the active voice, and the indicative mood. The *present tense* indicates a continuous action of hearing; the *active voice* means that the sheep produce the action of hearing; and the *indicative mood* points to an assertion of absolute reality.

Be Careful How You Hear

Think of how hearing the Shepherd’s voice can change a person’s life. *Akouo* means that the believer is to hear with a special pre-planned concentration in the presence of God’s revelation through the Holy Spirit. But before this can happen, the Holy Spirit must open up our spiritual capacity. Then *akouo* goes into operation.

Using another present active indicative, John 10:4 says that the sheep “*know* his voice.” Jesus is saying, “My sheep know me by continually hearing my voice, and by having an impartation of my presence.” Also in verse four we find a third verb: “The sheep *follow* him.”

Here is how this process works: The Holy Spirit opens the door of our capacity. God's people hear the Shepherd's voice and faith is produced. "Faith cometh by hearing" (Romans 10:17), but only if we hear with *akouo*. It doesn't matter if you're a pastor, a pastor's wife, or if you have been in the ministry for thirty years. You're hearing has to be *akouo*, or else it is of no value. *Akouo* means to mix faith with what you hear because God has broken you and you have been wasted into humility—which brings you into a divine resource.

Please remember this: God is the source of our will. When we are in God's divine presence, He is in control of our will through inspiration, which comes through the impartation of the substance of His truth.*

The sheep hear, recognize, trust, and know the Source—Jesus Christ—and they follow Him. This is a present *passive* indicative verb which means that instead of the sheep producing the action of following the Shepherd, they receive the action of the Holy Spirit Who enables them to follow.

The Shepherd's voice comes through the open door of the Holy Spirit. I have discovered through my many years of experience that many

people do not know His voice. And because people don't distinguish His inaudible "still small voice," they hear the voice of strangers.

The apostle John wrote in John 10:5, "And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers." In the Greek, the "voice of strangers" refers to abstract and impersonal impulses to the central nervous system through a precise word, which is not only initiated from the air, but interpreted by the air, all in the name of a false god called Satan. This means if I am not living in objective truth from the Scriptures, I will pray to God, but I will hear the voice of Satan—a stranger's voice. Then, because of my dependence upon his voice, I will allow Satan to interpret what he is saying to me.

The vast difference between hearing God's voice and hearing the stranger's voice is this: Instead of objective truth feeding the subjective part of my mind, I feed on the subjective part of my mind apart from the objectivity of God's Word. Therefore, it is vital that we learn to hear, know, and follow Jesus Christ, our good Shepherd.

**Read Living and Inspired Life from the Breath of God, Grace Publications, 1997.*

Chapter Two
RECEIVING A VISION
IN THE VALLEY

Visions come through tragedies, trials, and losses. As an illustration, let's look at Isaiah 6:1, "In the year that king Uzziah died [Isaiah] saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple." Uzziah had been king for fifty-two years. Isaiah, who was a patriotic prophet, loved and adored the king. But until Uzziah died, Isaiah never had a vision from God.

Oh, that God would not have to bring a crisis into our lives before we finally see *Him* and His vision. My vision is determined by my character, and my character is determined by allowing the Holy Spirit to open my ear so I can listen with concentration in the presence of God. Then, the impartation of the Word becomes the inspiration of my communion with Him. Only in this way can I really hear, know, and follow the

Shepherd into a vision. In order to hear God through the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, my character must correspond to something about God's character. But Satan fights the thing that we need most—daily manna. Not yesterday's manna, but manna for *today*.

Called by Name

Throughout the Scriptures, God uses many double salutations in addressing His people. He said, "Samuel, Samuel" (1 Samuel 3:10), "Moses, Moses" (Exodus 3:4), and "Jacob, Jacob" (Genesis 46:2). In Matthew 23:37, Jesus said in brokenness, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem." In Matthew 27:46, as Jesus was hanging on the cross, He cried out to His heavenly Father, "Eli, Eli." (My God, My God).

Every double salutation has a very forceful meaning; it is an intense communication. It would be just like me talking with someone in my office about something very serious, and then saying his name, "John, John!" Without speaking harshly, but by saying a person's name twice, they will hear what I have to say. God does this with us through His still small voice so we will hear what He has to say to us through His Word.

As we have mentioned before, thirty-three times in the Gospel of John, Jesus was quoted as saying, “verily, verily....” Every time, the connotation was, “Pay attention! What I am about to say is very important.”*

And, in Jeremiah 22:29, God gives the only *triple* salutation ever used in the Bible, “O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD.” Can you grasp the Creator’s desire, beseeching the attention of His creation? “To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: behold, the word of the LORD is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it” (Jeremiah 6:10).

But a revived heart desires to obey as soon as it hears from God. I have never had so much fun as I have in recent days by going alone, prostrate before God, and saying, “Lord, You are the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. You’re the God of the Gentiles, the God of the Church Age. You are the God of the Word, and You’re the Lord of Resurrection. But You are also the God of *me*.” He loves each one of us so personally.

One of the things most needed in the Church today is for us as God’s people to hear the Word and to enter into the most unique personal rela-

tionship with God that we can have. As we hear the Word of Christ with *akouo*, then a personal, living faith is born (Romans 10:17). Then we enter into a personal fellowship of light, and a positive personal confession. This leads to a personal communion that makes us internally strong. Finally, we have a personal relationship with people that is ordained by Christ, who is the source of our will.

I never had a vision for my own life until God brought me into a valley. Although I had thought about having a vision and related to what the Bible says about it, I was never able to *receive* a vision until I was placed in a valley. *Only in the valley do we become broken.* And out of that brokenness comes a life from outside of ourselves, from Christ Who is seated above.

Think of it. Uzziah dies, and Isaiah receives a vision. To Isaiah, Uzziah's death was devastating because Uzziah had a commitment to the Jewish people as a national entity. But God needed Isaiah's attention so that He could impart His vision for the nation of Israel.

Finding Mercy in Deep Valleys

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou

art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me" (Psalms 23:4). "The valley of the shadow of death" actually reads "the *valleys* of the *shadows*" in the original text.

When David wrote the twenty-third psalm, he was in the Judean hills. He had been exiled from his throne because of a conspiracy organized by his son. In an attempt to take over the kingdom, Absalom had assembled sixty-eight percent of the men of Israel into his army, while David was left with only thirty-two percent.

Still, David was concerned for Absalom. In 2 Samuel 18:5, "The king commanded Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom. And all the people heard when the king gave all the captains charge concerning Absalom." Verse 9 records that as Absalom rode upon a mule, his hair was caught on the branch of an oak tree and he hung there helplessly. In verse ten, a certain man saw Absalom and went to tell Joab. But when Joab heard that Absalom had not been killed, he disregarded David's desires and thrust three darts through Absalom's heart.

When David heard about Absalom's death, he mourned and said, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for

thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!” (2 Samuel 18:33*b*).

David did not mourn because of sentimentality. Absalom did deserve to die, but David was a man of mercy. He had received so much mercy in his life that he knew how to give it. That’s why he didn’t want Absalom killed.

It looked as though David had already lost his kingdom, and now in that valley, it appeared that he would lose the battle. But in the midst of it all, David had a vision of love for his son. His vision was to bless his enemies. For David, this was a valley of love where he received a vision of compassion for his son Absalom—even while Absalom was trying to kill him.

**Read, God Speaking to Us—What a Miracle, Grace Publications, 1997.*

Chapter Three

CONCENTRATING AS YOU GO THROUGH THE VALLEY

The impartation of the Word of God through *akouo*, as it's recorded in 2 Peter 1:3-4, will determine my character before God, and my character determines my vision with God.

1 Corinthians 3:9 says that we are laborers together with God. When we study that passage in the Greek and let the Spirit teach us, we realize that there is so much more to this verse. The original text reveals that "we are co-laborers because we concentrate with God." The Bible teaches that God is in me, expecting me to do His will. But He is the source of my ability to do it (See Philippians 2:12-13).

Levels of Trials

Based upon our hearing (*akouo*), knowing, and following the Shepherd with special respect for His presence and honor for His revelation,

God has ordained different levels of trials so His character can be formed in us. Paul said in Galatians 4:19, “I travail *in birth* again [the original says, “in pain”] until Christ be formed in you.”

“Every thing that may abide the fire, ye shall make it go through the fire, and it shall be clean: nevertheless it shall be purified with the water of separation: and all that abideth not the fire ye shall make go through the water” (Numbers 31:23). God is saying, “I only want to choose people that can abide in a fiery trial. Choose them first.” God chooses people like Moses, Abraham, and David. They are God’s first choice for the angelic contest.

Then God says, “But if they can’t go through the fire—which is the supreme trial in the angelic contest—then take them out of the supreme trials and put them into the water trial.” The water represents the Word (See Ephesians 5:26, John 15:3). The water trial means to be persecuted as a Word of God Christian. This trial is not, however, as intense as the test of fire. It means that though the one who abides in the Word will be persecuted, he does not yet have the maturity, emotional strength, or stability to be put in the front lines. God will not put Christians who are at this level in the heat of the battle

because they wouldn't be able to take it (See 1 Corinthians 10:13).

Think of Isaiah 43:2 in the same context: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." In this verse, God speaks of *three* levels of testing: waters, rivers, and fire.

Consider the Source

God spoke to Israel in Isaiah 1:2-3 and said, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth..." God speaks to His people like a mother speaking to her son whom she loves so dearly, or like parents pleading with their children in love saying, "Please hear this time. *Please* hear me."

"Hear, O heavens [elect angels], and give ear, O [inhabitants of] earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider" (Isaiah 1:2-3).

In Isaiah 1:3, the Hebrew word for "consider" is equivalent to the Greek word *akouo*.

God is saying, "They do not know that I am calling them by name. Because they do not listen with concentration and faith, there is no impartation of life. At best, there is an intellectual stimulation for the hour. But they *do not* know My voice, so they cannot follow My leading."

In Isaiah 1:5-6, the Word of God gives the reason that the nation of Israel was unable to hear God's voice: "Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment."

Bringing Forth a Vision through Patience

James 1:4 says, "But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." A more accurate translation of this verse from the Greek reads as follows: "Let your patience endure that you may be stable, mature, and complete when I speak to you, with no defects in your capacity to listen." We must be 'complete' in our listening habits so we can listen to a *personal* God speak a *personal*

word about our *personal* situations.

Our patience, as it endures, will always bring forth a vision. And if our patience endures the valley, then the vision that God gave us will come forth out of that valley. Isaiah 35:7 is an illustration of what God will do for us in the valley: "I will take the parched ground and make it a pool."

CONCLUSION

The Word of God must never be watered down in our listening habits. We sometimes refer to preachers who “water down” the Word. But the responsibility also rests on the listener to refrain from watering down the message as he hears it. The believer must let Jesus Christ in when Jesus Christ speaks.

When God brings a word to us in a message, He will test us to see whether or not we heard it. The Lord Jesus Christ wants us to understand that there is a price to be paid for having a vision. He will keep bringing us back to the same point over and over again until we have learned the lesson He wanted to teach us in the valley, regardless of how much we have *heard*. But as soon as we learn obedience, then a vision will be imparted and implemented.

Except our righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, we will never experience God’s kingdom. Don’t be satisfied with anything less than being totally con-

trolled by God. Don't be satisfied with anything less than total occupation with Christ.

Don't worry about your relationships with people. Just love them. Their response is inconsequential. The only thing that matters is your relationship with God. When I'm rightly related to the God within, then I'll always be rightly related to everyone without. Even if I can't have a relationship with someone because they are living in sin and will not repent, I'll still be rightly related to that person in my mental attitude. So many Christians are occupied with people, when being rightly related to God is the issue.

We will be tested on everything God teaches us from the Scriptures. He will never teach us great lessons without ultimately bringing us into the valley to experience them. And whatever God teaches us He will use in the vision He imparted while we were in the valley.

Father, bless us to know, to hear, and to follow Your voice. We thank You for Who You are, and for Your inspired Word. Thank You for supernatural insight into life that we have, because You have made us and redeemed us. Bless us in Christ's name. Amen.