

Call to Obedience #282
PO Box 299 Kokomo, IN 46903 USA
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Living by the Voice of God

By Reimar Schultze

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” —John 10:27

The apostle Paul reflected this same idea when he stated, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” (Rom. 8:14). In this verse, Paul tells us that every son of God is led by the Holy Spirit. In fact, you can tell whether or not a person is really a Christian if he lives by the voice of the Self-life or by the voice of God.

All of mankind live by either one of these two voices. Yet, it is remarkable that much of Christendom literally stiffens up with resistance toward Paul’s teaching of Romans 8:14 and Jesus’ teaching of John 10:27. This is because most professing church people rarely, if ever, hear the voice of Jesus, nor do they make any effort to become acquainted with it because of the changes it may demand. Yes, living by the voice of our Lord means having him direct your life—every bit of it! And most Christians are not really willing to give up the reins.

Now, let’s get a little history lesson on the voice of God.

Adam lived by the voice of God until he disobeyed. “Enoch walked with God,” and how else but by the voice of God. Noah lived by the voice of God, and so did Abraham, the judges, and the godly kings.

The prophets lived by the voice of God, and so did Jesus and the apostles. How common, my friend, to read in the New Testament such accounts as these: “Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot” (Acts 8:29), or “He saw in a vision... an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius...” (10:3), or “...the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them” (13:2), etc.

The Bible is overflowing with passages of God speaking to man! “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” Jesus said, “My sheep hear my voice...and they follow me.”

How boring and unfulfilling to the soul it is to sit under the ministry of men who cannot say “The Lord led” or “God has revealed!” without cheating. Oh, we don’t need to hear more from men. We have already heard enough from men. We need to hear from God; and the apostle John hopefully promises that “we (the saints) shall all be taught of God” (John 6:45; from Is. 54:13).

What are some of the ways by which God speaks to man? His way of speaking varies, so observe that “...there are diversities of operations (workings), but it is the same God which worketh all in all” (1 Cor. 12:6). This confirms that God speaks in many ways and that he speaks differently to different people. We must never try to copy or covet the way God speaks to another person. So, in what ways does God speak?

1. God speaks to us through the Scriptures.

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable...” (2 Tim. 3:16).

Scripture—the Bible—is the foundation and measuring stick of all claims that “the Lord spoke to me.” Scripture is never wrong. It may be wrongly interpreted, but it is never wrong. Our leadings, what we profess to have heard, are wrong if they are not in harmony with the Word.

Therefore, the first assignment of new converts is not to try to get a “leading” or direction of the Spirit, but to thoroughly learn the Bible by which they can measure all things.

The second assignment of new converts is to obey all that the Scriptures ask them to obey. This is because a disobedient heart will not be led by the Holy Spirit and will err in its impressions.

I have to confess that it is very disturbing to me to hear so many people saying, “the Lord told me...” I hear this from people who dress unholy, who are fault-finding, bitter, and resentful, who are full of hurt feelings, who are unfaithful in church, who have no prayer life, who live in adultery, or who have no credibility in their marriage, at work, and at church.

If we quarrel with our spouse, if we complain, if we are resentful toward anyone, if we don’t tithe, if we are not faithful in church attendance and prayers, if we are not paying our bills, if we are not helping and honoring our pastors and our parents, if we watch ungodly television programs and listen to ungodly music, we had better not go about saying, “God led me” or, “the Lord told me.” For if we do such things, we are none of Christ’s. Let us not be deceived—sons of God obey God, and they “make no provisions for the flesh” (Rom. 13:14).

My friends, we must not disassociate “hearing from God” from holy living!

2. Sons of God are led by the gifts of the Spirit.

Now, there are three gifts that God uses to guide us: the gift of wisdom, the gift of knowledge, and the gift of discernment of spirits (1 Cor. 12:8, 10). These gifts are not given to all, so don’t expect God to speak to you through a gift which you do not have.

The gift of wisdom is mentioned first. It is not the wisdom of men, but it is the wisdom of God that is mentioned here. The gift of wisdom is God giving his supernatural wisdom to us so that we may know how to proceed in any matter.

Then the gift of knowledge is God telling us what to do without it necessarily making any sense at all. In fact, most of the time, what God reveals through this gift contradicts all reason, common sense, and all you think ought to be done.

The gift of discerning of spirits lets you know what is in man, what’s below the surface of man’s demeanor and outward appearance.

3. God speaks to us through our conscience.

In Romans 2:15, Paul states that our conscience can tell us what is morally right or wrong. The conscience is not the product of biological transmission but the gift of God to every man born into this world! Indeed, the conscience could be understood as the light that Jesus places into every man born into the world (John 1:9).

The conscience, in other words, is the inner light which Jesus put inside of you when you were born. The conscience is the most primitive seat of morality. It can be dulled by neglect or abuse (1 Tim. 4:2). We must never go against our conscience. Paul tried to have a conscience void of offense toward God (Acts 24:16). The conscience always supports the witness of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God (Rom. 9:1; 2 Co. 1:12). And in the final analysis, my friend, we will be judged as to how we have responded to our God-given conscience (Rom. 2:15–16; 13:5). Our conscience may be weak or strong, but it will become stronger the longer we walk with God (1 Cor. 8:7).

4. God can lead us by his inner voice, speaking to our heart.

There is a natural man, and there is a spiritual man. The natural man has physical hearing, but the spiritual man also has ears by which he hears the voice of God. When Jesus said of the Pharisees, “hearing they hear not,” (Matt. 13:13), he meant they could hear with their natural ears but not with their spiritual ears. Therefore, Christ’s message did not reach their hearts.

5. We can discern the will of God by having been with Jesus.

The longer we are with Jesus, the more we know and have the mind of Christ. Very often, we just know what he would and would not have us do (1 Cor. 2:16).

6. God can speak to us through our transformed minds.

The old mind of the natural man cannot receive the revelations of God. But through the renewal of the mind, “you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” as Paul says in Romans 12:1–2.

7. We may hear the voice of God through angels, visions, or dreams.

These are some of the many ways by which God leads his dear children. It is only as he leads that we can come to the good works “which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph 2:10).

Some Gentle Warnings.

Let me end by giving you five warnings when it comes to hearing the voice of God.

- i. As a new convert, realize that most of your leadings will probably come through the Bible. It generally takes some time before your life is lined up entirely with every principle of the Scriptures. It will take some time before you have sensitive, spiritual ears.
- ii. Do not seek to hear the voice of God directly. When you press for a leading like this, you most likely will end up with a wrong impression. The Holy Spirit will contact you without your pressing him when he has something to tell you. And he will do it according to his own schedule. Until then, well, just wait and do what needs to be done otherwise.
- iii. Before you can trust a leading, impression or direction of the Lord, be sure you come to the point of total neutrality on the matter at hand. Otherwise, your “leading” will tend to be prejudiced toward your own desires, deceiving yourself. If you cannot come to a place of total neutrality in your heart, seek out men and women who have walked with God for a long time to help you find God’s will. If you are not willing to accept their decision once you ask them, plan on the Holy

Spirit being grieved and him not leading you in the future, unless you thoroughly repent.

- iv. Stay away from Christians who have a record of invoking the name of Jesus to manipulate people and events for their own gain.
- v. Be careful not to “take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain” (Ex. 20:7).

Finally, how can we be led by the Holy Spirit? Pastor Schultze, can you put it all into one sentence? Well, I will try. We are led by the Spirit by abiding in Christ. We abide in Christ by obeying every word of God and by crucifying the flesh with its plans and its arrangements.

Yes, how wonderful these words of Scripture: “Out of heaven he made thee to hear his voice.”

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