

Exodus – Part Two – Hearing God

- I. Background:
- a. We have begun a sermon series on Exodus – a picture of our own journey from sin and self into the promised life of Christ.
 - b. Last week we looked at Moses’ stellar beginnings, from his miraculous rescue from an edict that would kill every male child to his being raised in Pharaoh’s home, to getting the best education available on the planet.
 - c. We discovered that Moses kept in touch with his family, definitely his sister and brother; and knew of his Hebrew heritage. When he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, he struck and killed the Egyptian and hid his body in the sand...and the next day sought to be recognized as a leader for the Hebrews who essentially rejected. So he ran away across a 500 mile desert to the land of the Midianites where he began to make a living as a shepherd.
- II. This week:
- a. Exodus 2:23 *Now it came about in the course of those many days that the king of Egypt died. And the sons of Israel sighed because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry for help because of their bondage rose up to God. 24 So God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. 25 God saw the sons of Israel, and God took notice of them.*
 - i. The Pharaoh that had sought Moses’ death was now dead.
 - ii. The plight of the Hebrews was still severe. And the bible says that their cry for help “rose up to God.”
 1. God hears the cry of the afflicted.
 2. Affliction leads men to call upon God, just as the Hebrews began to cry out to heaven for deliverance.
 3. **Affliction is used by God to break men of their own sense of self-diety.**
 - b. **God takes 4 actions:**
 - i. **God Hears:** *So God heard... their groaning.*
 1. God hears. He sees all. He knows all. He knows your suffering.
 2. He knows your plight. He knows what you are going through.
 3. We like the Israelites say, “Why don’t You do something about this misery I am in?”
 - a. And we feel like we are getting silence. No answers.
 4. But God has heard.
 - a. Nothing escapes His notice.
 - b. We must not interpret God’s apparent slowness to act as deafness on His part.
 - c. Jesus got news that his friend Lazarus was dying and he delayed three more days. Why? He could have prevented it! He could have spared the family suffering. Why didn’t He do it?
 - i. Because in God’s providence and divine knowledge, He had something BETTER than that for Lazarus and his family.
 - ii. Oh, how we would settle for less!
 - iii. How we would take crumbs instead of loaves...just to suffer a bit less.
 - ii. **God Remembers...** *“God remembered His covenant with Abraham...”*
 1. God didn’t forget. The act of remembering means to “call to mind.”
 2. To forget means to “never call to mind.”

- a. **God can only forget one thing...Our sins once they are forgiven.**
 - i. The bible says “Jer 31:34 “*I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.*”
 - ii. That is, He will never call them to mind or hold them against you...once forgiven, they are gone forever.
 - iii. The only ones who will whisper them to you will be the devil, ourselves and other..
 - iv. But God will never accuse you of your forgiven sins.
 - v. If God can let them go, you can too!
 - vi. Have you been carrying them still? Let them go today.
 - b. **Close your eyes, pray...God I hate that sin that crushes me by its remembrance. But God, You have forgiven it when I confessed it. I release it. I refuse to carry it or its guilt any longer. I am forgiven. I am free by the blood of Jesus. Amen!**
3. Now, God does call to mind His promises to us.
- a. He never forgets them.
 - b. And while our praying promises to Him doesn’t cause God to remember, it does attach our faith to His word and allow His will in Heaven to come to earth and into our lives.
 - c. His word and His promises yours by faith.
- iii. **God Sees** *God saw the Sons of Israel...*
- 1. God sees everything.
 - 2. God saw the 6 million Jews who died in death camps of Hitler, just as He saw the 200,000 people swept away in the Tsunami.
 - 3. Nothing escapes His vision.
 - 4. In this case, He SAW the Israelites.
 - 5. This underlines the fact that he is omniscient...that is All Knowing.
 - a. He sees all, he hears all, he knows all.
 - b. Do you think you can really do anything in secret? Nope! No one might see you but God. And He sees all and knows all. You cannot hide anything from Him.
 - c. **Like the movie, “The Final Cut” (tell story).**
 - d. How would you live differently if you knew that others would someday see all you did and saw? God already knows what you’ve done. He has seen it all
- iv. **God takes Notice.** *God took notice of them*
- 1. The word yada, to know, in the Hebrew Bible is frequently used in the sense of approving; and because God knew-had respect for and approved of what His Hebrew children were going through, He was determined to deliver them.
 - 2. Basically, God “fixed His eyes” upon the Hebrews and determined to show Himself to be God on their behalf.
 - 3. He had decided to become their God and to make them His people.
- c. 3:1 *Now Moses was pasturing the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.*
- i. Notes
 - 1. Moses is working as a shepherd, an occupation that the Egyptians found “detestable.” Genesis 46:31 tells us, "*Every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians*

- a. It is as if he has sunk to his lowest spot. From the royal court of Pharaoh to the lowest occupation available.
 - b. This is where God finally gets our attention...when we run out of our own options, when we come to the lowest places in our lives. That is when we look up and find out He has been waiting the whole time for us.
2. Notice that Moses is leading his flock to the west side, or “backside” of the desert when he came to the mountain of God. (apparently known to the Midian priests).
- a. It was in this same mountain that, centuries later, the Lord met with and commissioned Elijah (1 Kings 19:4-11)
 - b. The backside of the desert is the wilderness experience, the desert experience that inevitably every man or woman who has been used by God must go through.
 - c. It is the place where every pretense, every substitute for God, every affection is stripped away and we are left to see ourselves as we are. Jesus went...”into the wilderness” for 40 days. It is a place of testing and refining.
- d. *Exodus 3:2 The angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed. 3 So Moses said, "I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up."*

i. **Steps to hearing God.**

1. **God gets your attention.**

- a. God lights up a bush but it doesn’t burn up.
- b. “Gee, that’s unusual.” Moses thinks.
 - i. Now it is one thing to get our attention.
- c. I have known people who have never paused to hear God even though they have seen the hand of God.
 - i. They see God do healings and miracles in their lives and their family’s lives.
 - ii. They see the things LINE UP but they never go beyond connecting the dots. They simply say, “God is real” and stop with that.
 - iii. That would be as if Moses were to look at the bush and go on his way, and tell his father in law....”gee, you wouldn’t believe what I saw today.”
 - iv. God does this a lot in our lives, and you know what? We see something spectacular and go, “Gee, that’s neat. I guess that was God.” And we never do what Moses did...and that is move closer to the bush!

- d. But Moses didn’t stop with the unusual sight. He moves toward the bush.
 - i. I believe that the reason Moses heard God is that He wasn’t content to just say “I saw something cool (hot) today.” He wanted to find out more. That means he was “paying attention” to God.

2. *4 When the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!"*

- i. God then calls Moses’ name.
- ii. God calls him by name. Twice. A voice without a person present.
 - 1. Now that is weird. Who might that be? Gee, I will answer and find out.

- iii. Oh, oh! This might be God!
- 3. *4b And he said, "Here I am." 5 Then He said, "Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."*
- 4. **We relate to God as God.**
 - a. When God identifies Himself, there is almost always in a human being a sense of reverence and awe. When we feel God's presence in worship, what happens? We get goose bumps, tears in our eyes, we get weak kneed, we want to fall down and worship.
 - b. There is a sense of the holiness of God, the uniqueness and other-ness of God in contrast to our ordinariness. We relate to God as God.
- 5. **We hear when God speaks.**
 - a. *6 He said also, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.*
 - i. Moses hid his face when he learned that this is the God of the Promise. This is the God of His ancestors. This is the God of whom the verbal witness has been handed down generation by generation for nearly 400 years.
 - ii. How did Moses know it was God?
 - 1. When God speaks to you, you know that you know that you know.
 - 2. Even an unbeliever knows.
 - 3. When Muslim men and women have dreams and visions of Jesus Christ (which is happening in large numbers across the Arab world) – they know in their spirit that what they have experienced is from God.
 - 4. It is something that they know in their knower.

III. Application:

- a. There are generally 4 means of hearing God.
 - i. **Through alignment of circumstances.**
 - 1. I call this the "hearing the burning bush "
 - 2. Peter in the NT had a vision of a bunch of unclean animals and a voice telling him to eat them. He awoke and heard the Spirit speaking to his spirit about three men who were going to come looking for him and that he was to go with them. Suddenly, a group of 3 men came to his door and told him that God had sent them to talk to him.
 - 3. Peter adds 2+2 and says, "ah, God must be in this...I better go along and see what God is saying. As Peter shares the gospel with them, the Holy Spirit falls in power upon even these gentiles. What ended up happening is that Peter and the early church realized that the gospel wasn't just for Jews only, but for Gentiles as well. God used a set of circumstances to convince them.
 - 4. When I heard God tell me to quit smoking, there was an alignment of circumstances. (Concert – got my attn "give up a habit", back at the ice cream social – "none of these diseases" book opened to cigarettes just as I glance over his shoulder. Ouch! You got me God!
 - ii. **Through His Word.**
 - 1. Reading the bible is so important for this. You will be reading a passage and a single verse will jump out at you. It will find an identity with your heart. It will

“speak to you” and often will find confirmation with what you have been going through.

2. Caution: Don’t try the old “stick the finger in the bible trick” and hope to hear God.
 - a. Judas hung himself.
 - b. Go and do likewise.

iii. **Through other people.**

1. Lady at CCV who asked a question, “has God changed His mind?” struck me with such convicting force I knew it was from God.
2. Someone may be in a conversation with you and be totally unaware that God might be speaking to you through their words.

iv. **Through your spirit.**

1. I believe that God has only rarely spoken audibly to mankind, and that most of the situations described in the NT are occasions where God has spoken to their spirit.
2. Example: Philip and the Eunuch.

a. Acts 8:26-28 *But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, "Get up and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza." 27 So he got up and went; and there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship, 28 and he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah. 29 Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go up and join this chariot." 30 Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" 31 And he said, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. 32 Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this: "HE WAS LED AS A SHEEP TO SLAUGHTER; AND AS A LAMB BEFORE ITS SHEARER IS SILENT, SO HE DOES NOT OPEN HIS MOUTH. 33 "IN HUMILIATION HIS JUDGMENT WAS TAKEN AWAY; WHO WILL RELATE HIS GENERATION? FOR HIS LIFE IS REMOVED FROM THE EARTH." 34 The eunuch answered Philip and said, "Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else?" 35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him. 36 As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?" 37 [And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."]* 38 *And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him.*

1. At each juncture, Philip is listening to the Lord. The first verse “an angel (messenger) said to Philip”.
 - a. That messenger could have been an ordinary person, not a spiritual being; but because the information clearly was a message from God, the one who gave it to Philip is called an angel or messenger.
 - b. Then Philip is listening to the prompting of the Spirit:
 - c. And at each juncture, each obedience, he sees that his faith in the “voice” inside is real; and sees the results.
2. Do you imagine that Philip would have said, “Guess what I did today? I led someone to Christ!”

a. Actually, he would say, “God led me to a man whose heart he prepared for the good news!”

3. Example: Ananias as he got ready to greet Saul.

4. Other examples abound.

v. How do we hear through our spirit? How do we know it isn't our own voice?

1. That is the question that has troubled Christians for ages.

2. Jesus said His sheep know His voice.

a. You act by faith

b. You make sure it doesn't contradict what you know about God's general will (ie. if it tells you to kill, it ain't God!)

c. Conditions:

i. You should be obedient in God's general will to hear God's specific will.

IV. The trouble with hearing God.

a. **Hearing God is an affront to comfortable religion.**

i. We would rather go through religious motions rather than have to learn to listen to God and obey His moment by moment instruction.

ii. It is easier to play church than it is to hear and obey God.

b. When I talk to Christians who have attended church and dropped out, I find that they often talk about “going through the motions” of being a Christian.

i. They find that being a Christian isn't that great when it is just about “not doing things” they used to do.

ii. If the definition of a Christian is someone who doesn't do bad things but does good things, then there is no joy in that. It is a work ethic. It is a labor.

iii. But if the definition of a Christian is someone who receives Christ as Savior and who has the Holy Spirit who whispers life changing instruction day by day to him, who lines up the circumstances and events of his life...then we have an exciting life!

c. God has something incredible for us.

i. He has spoken in times past. He is speaking even now.

ii. God wants to direct your life so that you can participate in an incredible adventure!

iii. You only need to read the book of Acts to discover that it is the NORMAL state of life for a Christian to hear God regularly.

iv. From Stephen, to Philip, Peter, Paul, Ananias, and many more...they all heard God speaking to them and they listened. They didn't freak out.

v. **They expected God to talk to them.**

V. Will you stop “playing church” and discover what a relationship with Jesus Christ really is today?

a. God is trying to talk to you. God wants a relationship with you. Won't you turn to Him today?

b. Let's pray.

i. God, speak to us. Open our ears. Show us how to hear You. Show us what You are doing. We choose today to listen and to follow. We want the joy of following You in a moment by moment life filled with the adventure that only You can make. In Jesus name, amen.

c. Next week: Formerly Moses thought himself able to deliver Israel, and set himself to the work too hastily. Now, when the fittest person on earth for it, he knows his own weakness. This was the effect of more knowledge of God and of himself.