

HEARING GOD'S VOICE SERIES

CONDITIONS TO HEARING THE VOICE OF GOD

In this message, we want to talk about some conditions that are necessary to hear the voice of God. Lets look at I Kg.17: 6. The background of this story was God sent Elijah to the brook when there was a famine that took place as he prophesied. And while he was there, being fed by the ravens and drinking off the brook, it dried up. We did not know for how long it lasted but it dried up. So, the time came for God to change His method of provision for Elijah. Remember God is never limited to a method. Sometimes He provides you by the ravens and by the brook. But then when it ends that means He is going to provide you by a new way. Praise God that Elijah did not despair. He did not cry like some people do, "God why did you fail me in this way?" God never fails. Principles remains the same but His method changed. God has billions of ways to supply our needs. But we need to be in the right place, in the right time doing the right thing. If you are in the right place at the wrong time, doing the right thing, you won't get it. If you were in the wrong place doing the right thing at the right time, you wouldn't get it too. We need to get it right on three areas. Elijah had just exhausted God's supply in one avenue. Now God in verse six is saying I want to change my means of working with you. In supplying him at the brook, God took care of him only. But now God wants to move along and change the whole direction.

Lets look at verse six. *And the ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening; and he drank from the brook. And after awhile, the brook dried up because there was no rain in the land. Then the word of the Lord came to him, "Arise go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. Behold, I have commanded*

a widow there to feed you."

I like what God says here in verse 8 and 9 God says, "I have commanded," – in other words, "I have spoken to the woman. I have commanded her to provide for you." So there goes this man of God to this woman.

Verse 10 So he arose and went to Zarephath; and when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks; and he called to her and said, "Bring me a little water in a vessel, that I may drink." And as she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, "Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand." And she said, "As the Lord God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of meal in a jar and a little oil in a cruse; and now, I am gathering a couple of sticks, that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die."

God sent Elijah to this woman. He traveled all the way from the brook Cherith right to Zarephath. As he goes right to Zarephath remember what God said, I have commanded. So, he comes all the way, only to find that this woman was thinking it was her last day, and she was preparing her last meal. She was preparing her funeral. Look at what the bible says. She said, "We are going to eat and die." How come this woman didn't hear God? God says I have commanded her. Most of the time, you would have expected that as he came to the woman, the woman would say, "Are you the one whom God has commanded me to provide food?" That would be the normal response. After all God said, "I have commanded this woman." But she did not have any word from God. I wonder how many times God speaks to us and we do not hear. God says, "I have commanded this woman," but she didn't hear that command from God.

There are some problems that this woman was facing. We have done a teaching on how to hear the voice of God. We are building on that ground. Now in I Kg. 17, we see the reason why this woman couldn't hear from God. She was looking at herself and her condition. She was looking at her little bit of flour and a little bit of oil. Her eyes and her soul were tied to this life. She was tied to the cares of this life. She was tied to the things of this world. And as a result of that, she could not hear God.

God had to send Elijah all the way to tell this woman what to do. If this woman had heard from God, she would not have needed the man of God to repeat the command. She should have been ready. There was another woman if you remember in Elisha's time. Elisha used to pass by that town. Every time Elisha passes by, Elisha seems to meet this woman. This woman told her husband that there is this man of God who passes by. Let us prepare a room and let the man know that every time he passes by this is the place where he can stay. They prepared a room for the prophet. Now that woman was hearing from God. That woman discerned correctly. It did not say she heard a, "Thus says the Lord." It did not say that this woman saw a vision. But this woman was sensitive to what God was telling her to do. Whereas this other woman, this widow, was not paying any attention to what God was saying. The command had gone out but she did not hear. The reason is she is tied down to the things of this life. She was looking at herself, her situation, her son, her condition and some thing was holding her back from hearing from God.

Being In the Spirit

See God is a spirit and when He speaks, we need to be in the spirit. If God speaks in the spirit and we are in the flesh, we cannot hear Him. We are talking about how to be led by the Spirit. That is the condition that we have to place ourselves in to hear from God. It's interesting to know that all through the bible God has required people to come out of their physical situation, out of their affairs of this life to a solitary place before they could hear clearly from God. Some times, it looks as if it was on purpose. The question is why should they have to go all the way to the mountain before God speaks. Why couldn't God speak to them when they are in their house in their room? Couldn't have God spoken to them there? He could of course. God's presence is everywhere. He can speak anywhere anyplace any time. But it's not God that is the problem. It's us. We need to hear from God. It is our condition and our being tied down to the things of this life. And God has required that sometimes we come out of our situation and place ourselves in the position to be led by the Spirit to hear from Him. Now some of us desire to be led by the Spirit but we are not willing to give the time to hear from God. We expect God to interrupt the affairs of our lives and the activities of our lives. As we are busy in the

affairs of this life, we expect God to interrupt us and say, “Hi you over there.” God will not do that.

He gives His inward witness to a certain extent but the strength by which we hear from God is based upon how established is our private hearing from God. If we could hear privately in a solitary place, it will strengthen our hearing in the affairs of life. But if all the time we are involved in buying and in selling, in the humdrum of the things of life you may never hear from God. We may live and die without hearing from God. We may live and die without so much as hearing the command that God is commanding. God wants us to make an effort to come out of the things of this life and enter into a solitary place. I don't know where the solitary place for your life may be. God deals with each one differently. The geographical place may change but the principles are the same.

Separation From the Spirit of the World

Lets examine very carefully here I Kg. 19: 8 after Elijah has eaten of angel's food that was cooked for him. *So he arose, ate and drank; and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God.* That's a long, long journey. It says that *he went in the strength of the food as far as Horeb.* Notice what Horeb is called, the mountain of God. And it was on that mountain that took him over a month's journey. Imagine for one month all you are doing is just walking and walking. When you read about what happened on the mountain of Horeb it looks lovely. There was this strong wind that blows, there was this earthquake, there was this fire and there was this still small voice. We tend to look at all these things and we get caught up with that and say, “O isn't it wonderful that God spoke to Elijah? Isn't it wonderful he heard this still small voice?” But what about that one month over where all he did was walking and sweating? Wasn't that a pre-condition to hear God? For forty days and forty nights everyday, he got up and walked. That is a tedious thing to do. Some of you are not hearing from God because God is telling you, “I want you to get up and pray.” We only have to get up and pray. Elijah has to get up and walk for miles everyday. Some of us give up after one week. I mean when we start praying in the morning it lasted only three days. But here God is watching you and God says, “I will wait till the fortieth day.” Why must He do that? I don't know ask Him. And even if you ask Him, you may

not hear Him until after you do it. God seems to require that of Elijah and He seems to require of everybody. It's so common in the Word that some times we missed it.

Let's look at the life of Moses. We will look at the incidents first and then we draw the principles. Exodus 3:1 *Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian; and he led his flock the west side of the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.* And it was while he was on the mountain that day he saw some thing. He had to go aside and God spoke to him. Many times, he had passed by that way but this time he went to see what that flame of fire was and he heard the voice of God.

What about our Lord Jesus Christ? Lets look in the gospel of Mark 1:35 *Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.* Notice the word *solitary place*. In the gospel of Matthew chapter 14 after the feeding of the five thousands in verse 23 *And after He had dismissed the crowds He went into the hills by Himself to pray.* Now the Mount of Olives is a long way to descend. It takes a long time to climb up. Jesus went all the way up, why, to hear God. Just in case, you missed it. The gospel of Luke chapter 22 verse 39 *And he came out, and went, as was His custom, to the Mount of Olives.* Notice it was his custom to doing that. *And his disciples also followed Him.* Jesus' prayer closet when He was on this earth was on the mountain. It's amazing how many times He went up there to pray to be alone. Now Jesus had many homes opened to Him. In fact in Mark chapter one the home He was staying in was Peter's home. I am sure He had a place to pray if He wanted to. Its not that Jesus didn't have a room or a house that was offered to Him. There were many people who offered their homes to Him. He would have been welcomed to stay forever too. It was not that He didn't have a closet although he does have a closet in the bible. So, it's not that He didn't have a prayer closet. But I want you to notice here He always try to get back to nature. He always tries to get back to a place where the works of men are not around. Where all you have, is the natural surrounding and being quiet by yourself in a mountain. Why is that so? There seems to be some thing there that I am pointing to.

God requires that we separate from the activities of this life and have an act of separation from the things of this life to go aside to hear Him. It is a different thing when you are fasting and seeking to hear God and to be led by the Spirit while you are working and daily active in the things of life. And when you are fasting and seeking God and you are completely secluded from the things of this life and the affairs of this life, there is a higher degree of concentration you could give yourself to hear from God and God's Spirit. In bible times, God required people to go to a geographical place to hear Him. I don't know why He does that. But He has required it. He has required sometimes for people to make great expense and great sacrifices to go out of their way and place themselves in a position to hear God so that God could speak to them for what He wants them to do. We have to watch this principle very carefully. That is the methods that we are watching at. You got to isolate methods and principles. The principle behind it is not that you can only hear God on a mountain. Thank God, it's very hard to look for a mountain. Imagine if you are a Singaporean looking for a mountain. Then you have to go to Malaysia all the time to hear God. So, don't take this to the extreme and conclude that therefore you can only hear God on a mountain. That's not what we are saying. You are looking at the method and confusing method with principle.

The principle behind it is as I have said is this: God is a spirit. There are two spirits that are operational. One is the spirit of the world and the other is the Spirit of God. When we talk about the spirit of the world, we are not necessarily talking about something evil. Remember all the inventions of men have to do with human soul and the human intellect and indirectly they are the spirit of the world. You take any magazine, do you know all these things are the product of the spirit of the world. What is it saying, materialism, buy, covet, possess, fashion etc and this is the spirit of the world. The spirit of the world tells us to be like them. Get this, get that - it's the spirit of the world. We are looking at the principle now. We have looked at the method now is the principle. There is a spirit of the world that prevents your spirit from ascending above it. There is a spirit of the world that is a gravitation force that pulls you down. So that when the spirit of the world pulls you down you cannot hear God. If you surround yourselves with the spirit of covetousness, the spirit of materialism and all you see is the physical things of life you can never hear God. God could be speaking but you can never hear God.

See in the Tabernacle of Moses there are these three departments. There is the Holy

of holies, there is the Holy Place and there is the Outer Court, each separated by a veil. Did you know that the only place that you can hear God is in the Holy of holies? All these are primary religious rituals in the Outer Court is to gain entrance into the Holy of holies where the presence of God dwells. It was in the Holy of holies where you can hear God. We cannot hear God until our spirit is set free from the grip of the spirit of the world. The grip of the spirit of the world tries to pull you down everyday because you live in the world but Jesus said you are not of the world. And as long as you live in the world as long as you contact people or any thing that is produced by man, there is the spirit of the world involved. In the morning, all you have to do is to look at the newspapers and there is the spirit of the world there. It's involved and it moves in everything. It governs the affairs of this life.

Eph.2: 2 *In which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience.* Notice that the power of the air. He has not finished talking yet. Verse 3 *among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.* Verse 4, *But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us.* The first three verses are important to understand the blessing of verse 4. Paul was saying that it is the spirit of the world, the prince of the power of the air that pulls people down and influences people's mind.

If you remember the book by Howard Pitman "Demons: An Eye Witness Account", he talked about the major types of demon power. He speaks about the warring demons and they were dressed like Roman soldiers. But then he says he saw another demon that is one of the big bosses too. And that demon looks like an ordinary businessman. Dressed like a businessman. That demon could have walked on the streets and we would have thought that he was a prominent businessman. You wouldn't recognize it because part of the spirit of the world is materialism and being concerned about material things. Remember Jesus said life consists more of clothes, of shelter, and of food. Jesus was not concerned on this area. In fact, Howard Pitman himself said before he met the Lord and had the encounter of demons he had lived the average Christian life. He worked hard to earn a good salary. He worked hard to gain large amount of finances. He thought that he was pleasing God. He said in one moment in the presence of God he found all his life's

work burned up into ashes. He wept and cried bitterly when he saw that all his works were considered worthless before God, and he begged God for a second chance. God gave him a second chance and told him to tell the world what he saw and experienced.

All these things have to do with the spirit of the world. Now this also can be taken to the extreme. I am not saying therefore let's become hermits and completely abandon the world system. That will be a wrong interpretation. There are a lot of the people in the bible who lived in the world but not of the world. If you conclude therefore let's give up every thing, let's go, and live off the land like a hippie, then what you are saying is that you are to live outside of the world and be not of the world. I am not saying that. The word world or cosmos in the Greek means a world system. Jesus is not asking you to come out of the world system. But Jesus is saying that you are in the system but make sure you are not of it. You are not influenced by it. You are not motivated by it. He wants us to remain in the world system so that we could be witnesses. If you come out of the world system, you might as well die and be with God in heaven. There will be no witnesses.

So note what Ephesians two is trying to tell us. Verse 4 *But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses.* Now the word *dead in trespasses* is connected to verse one. Because verse one says, *we were dead in trespasses and sins.* And the meaning of being dead in trespasses is also in verse two. The spirit of the world is influencing us, unknowingly, ignorantly. The spirit of the world was influencing our decisions, our life and our motivation. Do you know that a lot of Christians are motivated by the spirit of the world? Why, because they live only for materialism, that is being motivated by the spirit of the world. If for one moment the supply for their need doesn't seem to come, they will keep God out. They will not be able to be like Job (bless his heart) he missed God in some ways but not in this area. For some Christians, if their material things were all taken away they will curse God and die. Job did not understand that God did not cause his problems. His problem was he thought that God caused everything. But the good part about him was that when everything was taken away, he says if he dies, he will die loving God. He didn't live for material things. He says, "I'll still bless God. I love God not because He feeds me. I love God because He is God." But some Christians if their supply does not come in they will give up their faith. They will give up Christianity and they will give God up. Not only that they will blame

God and some of them may even curse God and die. They will even say, "Why be a Christian if I cannot have all these things?" Do you know what they are? They are Christians but they are influenced and motivated by the spirit of the world. And it's those very Christians who find it very hard to hear God. They find that they can't hear God. Why, because as long as they are being influenced, motivated and guided by the spirit of the world, they won't be able to hear the Spirit of God. Some Christians knowingly are aware that the spirit of the world is motivating them but most of the time, Christians are ignorant unless it's pointed out to them.

Now understanding that being dead in trespasses is being motivated and being moved by the spirit of the world, let's look at verse 5. It says, *Even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly place in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.*

Notice that Paul contrasted being raised up in heavenly places against being dead in trespasses. In other words, he is saying that our spirit must ascend out of the grips of the spirit of the world. The spirit of the world is concerned with food, clothing and shelter. You say but surely, God cares, yes, but remember what Jesus said in Matthew chapter 6. My desire in God as I have always prayed is, "Lord I want to have the same mind that Jesus had when He was on this earth. I want to understand the processes of His thought when He walked on this earth the kind of thoughts that occurs to Him. The kind of motivation that He was moved in, I want to move into that kind of spirit." And in Matthew chapter 6, He is pointing again the spirit of the world against the spirit of God. In verse 25 "*Therefore*, when you see a *therefore* the previous lines are important. Verse 24 says there are 2 masters. See there are two spirits. Either the Holy Spirit is proclaiming Jesus as Lord or the prince of the power of the air is causing you to be dragged down by the spirit of the world. There are two masters and you cannot serve both. You either serve one or the other. God won't do it but supposing that for a moment all your food, your clothing, your shelter, your prestige, your status and everything you owned were taken away from you, could you still say, "I love Jesus." You don't need that to happen to examine yourself. You can imagine it. And if you imagine it and say, "I cannot really say I love Jesus," the spirit of the world is dragging you down. That is why you cannot hear from God. That I why you find it hard to be led by the Spirit.

Because being led by the Spirit you have to be free from that spirit of the world first.

We all know verse 33 seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added onto you. Some Christians are claiming that all the time but they don't practice verse 25. It says *Therefore I tell you, do not worry*. Some translations in the Greek says, *take no thought*. That means don't even allow it to affect your thought life. Don't ever allow it to grip your thought life until it's a motivation in your life.

Matthew 6: 27 Jesus is speaking against worrying again. Then in verse 28, He considers the lilies of the field. They just grow they neither toil nor spin. Then in verse 31 therefore do not worry take no thought what we shall drink or what we shall wear. Now verse 32 He says this is what the world does. He says for all these things the Gentiles seek. Jesus summarizes the spirit of the world. Everything you see in the world, you could see in the papers, you could see in the magazines. You know what the world seeks after, materialism. You mix with the people of the world you see their motives. Some people become philanthropists but they are still materialistic and that is just a small side thing for them. Some time back I saw a small little article about an interview of all the top multimillionaires and billionaires of the world. It was a small little write up about each one of them. You know what each one of them wanted? More money. See the world system grips them. Anyone of you who have been exposed to this system of this world especially those of you way out there earning your living you must be aware of the spirit that is there. When you start off you say a hundred thousand dollars is enough. When you hit that goal, it's not enough. You see it's the spirit of grabbing. It's the spirit of wanting more and more. You are never satisfied. We are not saying it's wrong to possess, to be blessed, or to be rich. A lot of people in the bible are rich; Abraham, Joseph, Daniel but they remain spiritual people.

What we are saying here is that there are two spirits we need to be aware of. There is the spirit of the world. You don't need to have a lot of money to be caught by the spirit of the world. You could be the poorest church mouse and you are caught with the spirit of the world. You know the spirit of the world is, food, clothing and shelter. O what shall I do? From the moment, you are born into this earth and the

average person who grows up in life that's the first goal that they want. They want to earn a decent living. See it's caught up already in the spirit of the world. It takes Smith Wigglesworth to say that making a living is one of the lowest ambitions someone can have. It is the ambition of living a life for God that all of us should have.

Now let's contrast a little bit and have a glimpse of heaven. We are born into this earth and the world system runs contrary to God's ways, so we cannot see the picture God sees. Thank God, in heaven food, clothing and shelter are automatically yours. They are bought with the precious blood of Jesus. What do I do in heaven then? Imagine on this earth you slog so hard for food, clothing and shelter but when you go to heaven, you find that they are all free. Then you ask, "What do we do in heaven?" There is a different motivation when you get to heaven: you are there to discover all that God has placed in you. You find out that God has placed in you as a service to other creatures. That's the goal. It's different. If we have the heavenly vision that we are raised and seated with Christ, we will lose sight of the goals that this world set, food, clothing and shelter. There are a lot of honest sincere and hardworking human beings out there working from morning till night and worrying about providing for their house and forgetting that they have a God. And they work their fingers to the bone. They spend all their time and their mental energy, their physical energy working and slogging. Some of them work and slog for 50 years and their happiness depend on circumstances. Joy comes from the Spirit. And the happiness that they experience when they pay up for their house is short lived. They work all their life on earth by the time, they have completed the payments for their very own house, they are about to depart from this world. That's all you have to show after 50, 60, 70 years of this life. Perhaps some have two or three homes. Perhaps some have a fat bank account. On earth, you end your life slogging for food, clothing and shelter. When you get to heaven, you find that you start your life in heaven with food, clothing and shelter already provided for. Then you realize what should be your motivation here on earth. The motivation should be the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Eph. 2:10 *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works.* That's our goal to be led by the Spirit, to discover our life's goal, to discover the purpose for our life. Along the way as you discover God's life and God's purpose as you seek first the kingdom of God food, clothing and shelter will be added to you. God

knows you need them. What God is saying is don't even let it occupy your thought life. Let your thought life be occupied with pleasing God; worshiping God; seeking His will; being led by Him. That's the reason why that widow in I Kg. 17 couldn't hear God. Because she was not in the heavenly places. Do you know Elijah was in the heavenly places? He always says, "I stand in the presence of God." Do you ever wonder why he hears God so easily? Wherever Elijah goes, there he hears the voice of God. He says, "I stand in the presence." There is this widow and she was not even a millionaire. All she has was a little flour and a little oil. But she was already caught up with the spirit of the world. You don't have to be rich to be caught with the spirit of the world. All she was involved with is her life on earth; her survival on earth and she missed God. Thank God for the man of God being sent there. Because for once she began to look to God. And she began to realize that God is bigger than her little jar of oil and her little pinch of flour. God is bigger than that. And life is more than food, clothing and shelter. Life is seeking and finding God's purpose for our life.

Being led by the Spirit I Cor. 2: 12 *Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God.* We have not received the spirit of the world that is concerned with the world system. We received the Spirit of God. That is why Jesus has to pull out from the world system and go to the mountain to pray from time to time. Jesus had to leave everything behind and go to the mountain to pray. If you haven't experienced that, it's lovely. Sometimes, I just love to go to a natural place and just get detached from every thing. All you have are the trees and nature around you. And you feel that you don't have a care in the world. Now you are more concerned about God's will in your life. You find that your spirit soars into the heights of heaven and you move into that realm. Not all of us are able to go that distance some times. But there are times when God does tell you to separate yourself geographically. But at other times in my personal life when I pray, it's strange but this is what I like. I don't like distractions. When I pray I like to go into a room or a place and I completely switch off all the lights. It is dark so that I don't even see the tables. I don't want to see any thing that is made by man. I only want to be conscious of what is going on in my spirit. We are not talking about living in spiritual darkness. But I like the cutting off of the things of this life. I like to just sit quietly if I can I try to go to a place solitary. That is why you can keep the principle in many different ways. It is not necessary to always run to the mountain. Even the mountains today are quite nosy. You run up to Genting Highlands casino resort and you will find people there gambling. See

the spirit of the world is everywhere. I want to separate out of the spirit of the world that is there in order to go into the heavenly and experience the realm of God. That's what it takes in order to hear God.

Notice the promise here in I Cor. 2 it says we have received the Spirit, which is from God that we might know the things that has been freely given to us by God. That means there are things that are freely given to you but you do not know them. The works that God has called you to. It says *that we might know the things that are freely given*. They are already freely given but we don't know them yet. For eyes has not seen nor ear has heard the things that God has in store for us.

If we were to quiet ourselves and pray, I tell you God can even give you the world news. At one time while I was praying, I was aware of what was going on in Europe. I saw a lot of demonic power running away from that area for whatever reason and going down south. And I asked God, "What is that?" Then the Lord said that the same spirits that used to dominate and oppressing those areas and causing all these strife and wars are moving down south. In other word, they will be going to some other countries. In the world people are talking about a new era, they are moving into a new freedom. They forget the demon spirits have not left the world yet. God was telling me that while one part of the world experience freedom the demon spirits just move south and begin to cause more oppression on other countries that use to be free. It is just a change of stage and actors that the same demon spirits are involved. God also showed me that part of what was happening was a light, which came down and said that those were the prayers of my saints that caused the demon spirits to scatter forth. But sadly I saw them moving down I didn't know fully well what was going to happen but I saw the spirits moving down south. You began to see violence and riots increasing in those areas. It was the same spirits that worked. They just changed the country they work in.

What I am saying here is not some thing you could just move in without an effort. You have to take an effort to move into the realm of the spirit. Cut off the spirit of the world and move into the area of the Spirit of God. Sometimes it takes going out to a geographical place. But if you understand the principle involved, you could get the same principle working with a different method. Just as God called Moses to the mountain. Just as God called Elijah to the mountain. Just as God's Spirit called Jesus

to the Mount of Olives. Just as God called Paul to Arabia. God will call some of you out of your vocation. He may not demand that you leave your place yet. He will demand that you leave your place for a while for a season of prayer to hear God. Don't ask God, "Why don't You speak to me here?" It's not up to us. We got to separate ourselves out. But through time as you develop the skill within your own context you will know how to separate yourself out in order to hear God. Then the Spirit can lead you.