

Hearing God Part 4

Opening Text: Acts 27:1, 9-13, 18-25

The apostle Paul is on the way to Rome to be judged before Cesar. It will be a long journey and Paul has a witness in his heart that they shouldn't set sail immediately. There were 276 people on that ship headed for disaster and Paul warned them.

V.10 - *“Paul advised them saying, **I perceive** that this voyage will end with disaster and much loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but also our lives”*

Paul had 'inside information' from God. He said: **“I perceive”**. One translation says, **“I sense”**. The Strong's Greek Lexicon translated this word from the Greek as **“I discern”**.

I perceive, I sense, I discern – Paul had information in his heart that was from God into his spirit. How important it is to be tuned to God's voice and hear his warnings!

I perceive - We find this same expression in several passages: Judges 6:22, Jeremiah 23:18, Mark 2:8, Luke 5:22, Luke 8:46, John 6:15.

1. Paul discerned God's voice among many other voices

- The expert advice from the helmsman.
- The concurring evaluation of the owner of the ship
- The agreement of the centurion

V.11 –... *“the centurion was more persuaded by the helmsman and the owner of the ship than by Paul”*

- The decision of the majority (verse 12)
- One more thing happened to prove Paul wrong: the weather changed and now the circumstances seemed ideal for navigation:

V. 13 - *When the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their desire, putting out to sea, they sailed close by Crete.*

The circumstances seemed to confirm the decision of the majority.

In the middle of so many voices, it looked like every voice was right except Paul's. Had God really spoken to Paul? Was his 'perception' wrong? Was that a real word from God?

2. Paul heard accurately what God was saying

Indeed, the rest of the passage shows us that they ended up sailing right into the middle of a perfect storm:

V.18 – *‘we were exceedingly tempest-tossed’*

V.20 – *‘Now when neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest beat on us, all hope that we would be saved was finally given up’.*

Hopeless, desperate, tired, without direction...

Proverbs 14:12 -*There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.*

In the journey of life, I believe that many storms could be avoided if only we would listen to what God had to say.

For many of us, I am sure that much loss, disaster and failure could have been averted if we had learned to identify and always follow that still small voice of God in our spirit.

3. The power of a word from God

God speaks again: **V.21-25**

In spite of their total disregard for this man of God and what he had to say, Paul must have prayed for them. In the process, an angel appeared to him saying, *“indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you”*. God gave him a new word for the situation.

They went from “much loss” (v.10) to “no loss” (v.22).

Reading on, we see that this story has a good ending: they were saved and not a hair fell off their heads (v.34).

What caused their lives to be spared?

- Was it the expertise of the helmsman?
- Was it the experience of the sailors?
- Was it the wisdom of the owner of the ship?
- Was it the decision of the majority?

No. It was because of a rhema Word from God.

How important it is to hear what God is saying! It literally may mean the difference between life and death, “much loss” and “no loss”.

4. It should be normal for Christians to hear from God

Paul was one out of 276 people on that ship. Do you know what was different about him? – He was a Christian and he could hear from God.

Jesus said: *“My sheep hear my voice”* – **John 10:27**

One of the defining characteristics of a Christian should be that they hear from God and make God-led, good decisions in life.

Romans 8:14 - *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.*

Why don't we see more Christians hearing from God then?

Here are a couple of reasons that we will explore in detail in future messages:

a) Neglect

We need to value His voice if we want to find it. We only fail, when we decide to live independent from the voice of God.

I have found many people who are Christians but still choose to live independent from the voice of God. They don't invite Him into their decisions. They will listen to mum, dad, friends, experts, the 'majority' or simply rely on their own understanding but do not consult God.

Proverbs 3: 5-6 - *⁵ Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths*

b) Not being 'clear to hear'

Having internal obstructions to the voice of God. It could be doubt, it could be unforgiveness, an offense etc. The same apostle Paul said:

Acts 24:16 - *... I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.*

A clear conscience is crucial to hear from God. A clear conscience is one where there is no offense against others or even offense against God. We need to be 'clear to hear'.

The bible speaks much about the conscience. The conscience is the voice of the spirit – that is where God will speak. That is where you will find the still small voice of God.

Conclusion

Here are a few points to remember:

- **In the journey of life many storms can be avoided if we are diligent to hear God.**
- **It should be normal for every Christian to hear from God.**
- **Invite the Lord to every decision and be led by what He says.**
- **Guard yourself against anything that could obstruct the voice of God in your heart: offense, doubt, unforgiveness etc.**