

KNOWING GOD'S VOICE - PART V



KNOWING GOD'S VOICE DEPENDS ON AVOIDING SNARES

In the previous message, we looked at some relatively minor traps the enemy has prepared for the believer on this road to effective communication with God. Now we will consider some major impediments—the snares.

The Snare of Rebellion

Rebellion is defined by one dictionary as 'opposition to one in authority or dominance.' Scripture calls rebellion 'sin.' It is deliberate refusal to do what is known indisputably to be the Will of God and involves the choice not to obey His authority. The sin of rebellion is a conscious decision to do what you want, not what God wants.

Several years ago, as I was driving to work one morning, God clearly spoke to my inner being: " Give a thousand dollars to a local church in the area and do it anonymously.

There was no doubt in my heart that it was God's voice, but the amount was so large for my budget at the time that I said to God, 'If You really want me to do this, confirm Your word to me.'

Well, for three hours all communication was cut off between the Father and me. I prayed continually, but I knew God was not honoring my prayers. It was as if God was deliberately ignoring me as I talked to Him.

I was beginning to get frantic about not knowing what the silence meant. At the end of three hours, God gently spoke to me again. He said, 'Melva, why did you ask Me to confirm My word to you? You know My voice. You knew it was your Father the first time.'

Needless to say, I repented and fellowship was reestablished. If you know God is speaking, it is rebellious to do anything other than obey. However, if you are honestly not sure it is God's voice, it is all right to ask for confirmation. The Word is clear on the subject: "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken; than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and stubbornness (insubordination) is as iniquity and idolatry." (I Samuel 15: 22-23)

Certain words of this scripture really leap out: To obey is better than sacrifice. Could this mean that obedience is better than going out on visitations or teaching Sunday-school class? Does this mean that in God's sight rebellion is as bad as witchcraft or dealing in the occult? Is God really putting insubordination in the same class as iniquity and idol worship? Yes, that's exactly what it means!

Here are two practical suggestions to help you avoid the sin of disobedience:

- ◆ If you are not receiving answers from the Lord, check to see if the enemy has caught you in his snare of rebellion and arrogance.
- ◆ Ask yourself whether there is a point where God told you to do something and you didn't, if so, take care of it immediately.

The Snare of Double-Mindedness

A spiritually double-minded person is an individual who has not made up his or her mind to do God's Will, accept God's advice, or believe God's promises on a consistent basis.

Oh, yes these individuals certainly want to hear from God! But after hearing the Word, will make up their own mind whether or not to act on that Word!

If you are not sure that God will keep his promise-if you are afraid of what God's answer might be-if you have an area of your life not fully turned over to Him or one in which you have strong desires and opinions of your own-then you will approach Him with doubt and unbelief.

To overcome this double-mindedness, you first need to acknowledge the fact. Double-mindedness usually stems from fear of some kind. You must realize that you alone are responsible for your being double-minded, and you must be determined to do something about it. As with all sin, you must acknowledge that your doubts and vacillations are wrong. Only then will you escape the snare of double-mindedness.

In the vacuum left by not hearing God's voice, the enemy speaks the words he wants us to hear. Often exactly what we have longed to hear, words that seem to suit our purposes and desires. Simply put being single-minded is like signing a blank check, and letting God fill in what He wants you to do!

The Snare of Pretense

A pretense is an act of make-believe, a fiction, a claim made or implied so as to give a false appearance. "Hypocritical" is a word used to describe people who are pretentious. They fake qualities they do not have.

No group of people received a more serious rebuke from the Lord than those He labeled "hypocrites." Enough is said in scripture about hypocrites to guarantee that if our behavior closely resembles theirs, we will have a problem with hearing from God.

Hypocrisy manifests itself in many ways

- ◆ **By Christians who pretend to be right with God when they are not. They hope to impress others with their piety. But their pretense, with a smile or a "praise the Lord" is designed only to convince man of their 'fake walk with God.'**
- ◆ **By persons with low self-esteem, who feel they must meet certain standards to be accepted by others.**

- ◆ By those who have an image or status they perceive must be maintained. Often, Christian workers who have troubles-but believe that Christian workers are somehow exempt from problems-will wear a veil to maintain their "credibility."

People whose acceptance by others is their top priority will wear the appropriate veils or "mask to fit the occasion and their own weaknesses."

How can we guard against and cure the common Christian malady of pretense? First, you and I must recognize God's disdain for pretense, and understand the problems we bring into our relationship with God when we pretend. Next, as we acknowledge God's love for honesty and His intense desire to help those in need, we come to realize that He helps us because He sees behind the mask into our real needs and knows us as we really are. Finally, if we show weakness, meet failure, or fall into sin, we must come to know that it is our position in Christ that makes us acceptable to God and not our behavior.

Here are two practical suggestions for avoiding the snare of pretense:

- ◆ Be honest with God in prayer. Tell Him how you are, how you feel and ask for His help.
- ◆ When God sends people to help you, be honest with them, accepting them as His representatives. Take off your mask! To be dishonest with some-one God's sends is to be dishonest with God. We are so use to wearing mask, that we wear them all the time.

Sometimes when I'm reading, I skip over lengthy quotations, but I'd like to you to read this one, since it explains so clearly, why we hide our true feelings from others. The quotation is taken from a book entitled "Seeds of Greatness," by Denis Watley.

"Seeds of Greatness"

Don't be fooled by me. Don't be fooled by the face I wear. I wear a mask. I wear a thousand masks-masks that I am afraid to take off and none of them are really me.

Pretending is an art that is second nature to me, but don't be fooled. For my sake, don't be fooled. I give the impression that I am secure, that all is sunny and unruffled within me as well as without, that confidence is my name and coolness by game, that the water is calm and I am in command and that I need no one. But don't believe me, please. My surface may seem smooth, but my surface is my mask, my ever varying and ever concealing mask.

Beneath lays no smugness, no complacency. Beneath dwells the real me in confusion, in fear, in aloneness. But I hide that. I don't want anybody to know it. I panic at the thought of my weakness and fear being exposed. That's why I frantically create a mask to hide behind-a nonchalant, sophisticated façade-to help me pretend to shield me from the glance that knows. But such a glance is precisely my salvation; my only salvation and I know it. That is, if it's followed by acceptance, if it's followed by love.

It's the only thing that can liberate me from myself, from my own self-built prison wall, from the barriers I so painstakingly erect. It's the only thing that will assure me of what I can't assure myself-that I am really something.

Who am I, you may wonder, I am someone you know very well. I am every man you meet, I am every woman you meet, and I am every child you meet. I am right in front of you. Please.....love me!

Seeing yourself as you really are will help you to unmask. It will take away the desire and need for a veil of pretense and hypocrisy. According to God's Word, what you really are right now is-a child of God! When you become honest with the Lord and see yourself, as His child, you will truly know the love that will separate you from all pretenses.

Love and acceptance is a sure cure for hypocrisy. We can joyfully remove our masks, not having the need to pretend anymore.