

VOICE OF CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

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LORD, WHAT CAN I DO?

As I look around at the bad things happening in the world, I often ask the question, "Lord, what can I do?" That is a serious question that all Christians should ask. The truth is that few people will impact great numbers of people. I have come to this reality after serving my Lord for most of my life. Our impact area is usually our family and friends. On the other hand, who greater is there to touch than those we care about? Paul's writings never encouraged Christians to pray for the lost but rather to pray and believe for fellow Christians who would be impacting the lives of the lost and needy in their vicinity. Perhaps the grass is greener where we are rather than on the other side of the fence. I find great peace and contentment in knowing that I have served my area of ministry faithfully. Hopefully, you can say the same. You see, we're not all ministers but we are equally important in the body of Christ. We all have an area to impact and should do so faithfully and joyfully. Jesus said to begin at Jerusalem. We all have our Jerusalems.

Pastor George Ferrington

THE SUPERNATURAL POWER OF A TRANSFORMED MIND

"Putting the Will of God on Display"

THE LEAVEN OF THE MIND

The Word of God is plain when it comes to addressing influence of the human mind that determines how we interact with the Kingdom of Heaven. It has been my observation that these influences of the mind affect us as we endeavor to become students of miracles. In Matthew 13:33, Jesus reveals to us the importance of guarding all things that influence our mind: **"Another parable He spoke to them; the kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened."** He spoke again of leaven in Mark 8:13-21: **"And he left them, and getting into the boat again, departed to the other side. Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, and they did not have more than one loaf with them in the boat. Then he charged them, saying, 'Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod,' And they reasoned among themselves, saying, 'It is because we have no bread.' But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, 'Why do you reason because you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive nor understand? Is your heart still hardened? Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments did you take up?' They said to Him, 'Twelve.' 'Also, when I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of fragments did you take up?' And they said, 'Seven.'" So He said to them, 'How is it you do not understand?'"**

What is the point of truth of Jesus' words when He said to them, **“Be careful of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.”** Here He was warning them about the influence of the mind that can rob us of the nutrients of revelation and renewal. There are three kinds of leaven mentioned in the above verses: the leaven of Herod, the Pharisees, and the Kingdom of Heaven. First and foremost, these leavens are alive and active today, and they greatly affect how we think, how we live, and everything about our lives. Leaven is a picture of influence of the mind of man. Leaven in the natural realm causes dough to rise. When you make homemade bread it's good to set the dough near a source of heat in order to activate the leaven in the bread. The fire of difficulty similarly causes the leaven in your life to be exposed and brought to the surface. The absolute truth that Jesus was trying to relay was based on the fact that when your mind is permeated by Kingdom leaven as Jesus talked about in Matthew 13, then the Kingdom reality of faith will come to the surface when the heat of affliction is applied. If the leaven of Herod or of the Pharisees is in your mind, then when afflictions come, that leaven will disrupt your revelation and your part in God's Kingdom's work.

THE LEAVEN OF HEROD

This is a good place to get specific and talk about the different types of leaven. The leaven of Herod is an agnostic unbelieving influence based on the strength of man and a man-based system. What we find in men who are full of Herod's leaven is a group of men who exclude God entirely. Their statement of faith is very cynical, “God helps those who help themselves.” If you found yourself in the boat without bread, the person under this influence would advise, *“Next time write a list and remember to bring bread. You are the answer to your own problem. Take responsibility for yourself. Be a self-made person.”* Pastor Bill Johnson said it this way: “One of the big problems in the church today is practical atheism.” Let me explain: large numbers of Christians are practical atheists because their actions prove they disbelieve in an active God. Sure, they would not say it that way; no church's written doctrine would declare there is no active God. But the truth of the matter is that believers face situations daily without bringing God into the picture. Like Herod, they say there is no divine intervention in practical living. The sad truth of this is that they are professing Christians but live exactly like their atheist neighbors whenever they face affliction. Their failure is based upon the fact that they fail to get God's counsel or fail to ask God to intervene. Our Christian American culture is permeated with the leaven of Herod. We are a country of self-made people, pioneers who think that through determination, discipline, and administrative excellence we can accomplish whatever we want. The danger as I see it in all of this is that the Church itself falls victim to this deception. The members come to believe that whatever they choose to accomplish in their own strength has been directed or honored by God. The truth is, God had nothing to do with it. Yes, we have money, unity of denomination, administrative skills, and we can accomplish our soulical goals. But it doesn't mean they were born in the heart of God!

THE LEAVEN OF THE PHARISEE

The leaven of the Pharisee represents the religious system. It embraces God in theory, but not in practice or experience. The concept of God is essential to all religious people, and the Pharisical mind was and still is based on religion and not faith in God. The Pharisee have God in form but without power. The experience of God is completely removed from all religion. If you found yourself without bread in the boat with a Pharisee, he would say, “God in His sovereignty has arranged for you to be in this boat without bread so that you can better identify with those who also have no bread in this hour.” The leaven of the Pharisee causes believers to provide explanations, not solutions. They say the bread bakery closed when the last apostle died. They refuse to let God be active right now on earth. The leaven of the Pharisee causes the believer to insist that all men pray, but just don't require the experience thus the manifestation of your belief. Here is the problem as I see it, people under the influence of Pharisee leaven know Jesus in the wrong way. This is exactly what the people of Nazareth, where Jesus was born, did. They knew Jesus in form, but not in relationship of fellowship, and thus they could never believe in His demonstration of God's power. All of the above brings us to the point that we must admit that there are many in the Church today that have been satisfied with Pharisee leaven. They are content with some documentation that they belong

to a certain brand of Church, but they are entirely unplugged from an active, invasive, here-and-now God. It's sad to say, under the influence of this leaven, many Christians find explanations for physical illnesses that do not bring the power of God into the arena of life. When confronted with certain sick people they say, "That person is tormented by that particular affliction, but with the lifestyle he leads, it's no wonder." This concerns me because they feel a prideful sense of understanding at explaining the problem, and yet they are powerless to provide a solution, and they make a villain of anyone who tries. The disciples fell into this, too. They asked Jesus, "**Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?**" (John 9:3) People don't realize that when God redeems a situation He does it so thoroughly that it looks like He created the problem as an opportunity for His power of glory to be seen. The same thing could be said about sin. Yet we know that God did not make a person sin just so His glory could be revealed. When Jesus is at hand, a problem takes on purpose. Without his redemptive touch, the problem is just another work of the devil. Jesus was so focused on solutions that He didn't even entertain the Pharisaical debate.

Jesus Christ exposed the core characteristic of the influences of Herod and the Pharisees, both are based on the fear of man. Both are motivated by what people think. But when we are influenced by Kingdom leaven, we don't fear what people think about us. God is raising up a people who are considerate, compassionate, and caring but who are also not motivated one bit by a fear of man. Instead they live out of the fear of God. Psalm 25:1-4 says, "**The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant.**" In Proverbs 29:25 we read, "**The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe.**" There is no doubt, the fear of God makes our sight clear. The fear of man makes us endlessly confused.

In our next lesson we will teach on "THE GOOD LEAVEN OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN." Until then may the Lord keep each of you as you walk in the Spirit fulfilling Heaven's reality on this earth.

HAVE A BLESSED DAY

Gene R. Brown, Associate Pastor

HEARING GOD

"The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought them out, all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him, because they do not recognize a stranger's voice." (John 10:3-5)

I am told a story about the early shepherds that goes like this. When they had a young sheep (kid) that was unruly and wandering, they would take the kid up and break one of its legs. Now that meant the kid could not run, defend itself, or keep up with the flock on its own. It was helpless, and the kid knew it. So the shepherd had to carry the kid draped over his shoulder for several weeks while the leg healed. This created a bond between the kid and the shepherd that was even stronger than that with its own mother. When the kid was able to walk and run again, it was still bound to its shepherd, because it knew the shepherd was its source of protection and deliverance, as well as every other good thing. The kid knew its master's voice, and was obedient because it had learned to recognize the virtue and worth of that voice. Psalm 23:2-3 tells us, "**He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside still waters, He restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.**"

"Because of your great compassion you did not abandon them in the desert. By day the pillar of cloud did not cease to guide them on their path, nor the pillar of fire by night to shine on the way they were to take. You gave your good Spirit to instruct them. You did not withhold your manna from their mouths, and you gave them water for their thirst." (Nehemiah 9:19-20) We serve a God that does not want us lost in the wilderness of this world—He has made it possible for us to be in His presence continually and to know His ways. "**Lead me, O Lord, in your righteousness because of my enemies—make straight your way before me.**" (Psalm 5:8) Then in Isaiah 48:17, the prophet says, "**This**

is what the Lord says—your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go.”

Today I want to briefly explain to you what it means to me to hear God’s voice and be led by that Word. God speaks to each of us in different ways, so it is not possible to teach a definitive formula for hearing Him. In my case, it has come from years of listening with my heart and watching His hand move in my life. At times I have to look very closely to see it, because my flesh wars against it so. He has always been there, and I know I can count on Him to deliver me from every circumstance and to teach me in it. I guess that was a key element for me to learn to hear His voice—that I determined to seek His deliverance in every issue of life and learn from every circumstance. Therein, I found a correlation between the situation and the inner witness I felt about that situation before and after it occurred. Slowly, I promise you, very slowly I began to realize that God was speaking to me even in advance of my situation about the rewards and dangers, and what it would take to capitalize from or escape from that circumstance. From this I began over years to develop a “sense” that has led me. Some call it “intuition” and others call it “divine guidance.” I know that God has promised in His Word to watch over His own and to protect and keep us. He has told us that it is His good pleasure to bless us, but we know that we are not worthy of blessings when we sin. So we need Him, like any good Father, to instruct us in what is right and wrong. He does that continually, once we learn to listen to that sixth sense. **“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.”** (John 16:13) The Holy Spirit that lives within each of us knows the heart of the Father, and the Spirit will teach us the will of God. As we learn to listen, we become privy to the intimate things of our Father as He charts our lives in accordance with His will. Why do we not hear that voice at times? Because we have determined that we want to go our own way for a while. God will allow that, but it is not His perfect plan. He continually woos us back and is delighted when we turn back to Him. Like that loving shepherd, He watches us hurt ourselves, but He never abandons us. His voice of comfort and compassion is there to guide us back into His truth.

It may take time to acquire the ability to hear God’s voice. Not because He is not speaking to you through the Spirit, but because you are not really listening. It begins in small steps of faith and seeking Him by His Word. Then look for Him in all the things that happen in your life—good or bad. In the bad look for His voice of deliverance that can come through others in encouragement or by guidance in the right way to deal with that situation. In the good things, give Him the glory and praise, regardless of what the world may say. He is the giver of all good things. Let your intuition (inner thoughts) fall upon Him and see if He will not give you good thoughts and leadership about all the things of your life.

“Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.”
(Jeremiah 33:3) Bro. Mike Woods

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**ARISE, YE
SLEEPERS!!!**