

□

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” — Revelations 2:7

Our Heavenly Father has at all times and in all phases of history made known what His word and will is. In the Old Testament times, God spoke to His chosen vessels, the prophets, who then related to the people what He had spoken. In his second letter, Peter writes: “For the prophecy came not in the old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” (2 Pet. 1:21)

The writer to the Hebrews compares God’s Word to a two-edged sword (Heb. 4:15). We understand that one edge portrays the law and the other the gospel. As he later relates, the giving of the law on Mt. Sinai was accompanied by fire, darkness, and storm, the sound of trumpets and a frightening voice. It inspired terrible fear in those that heard it. Surely it frightens all those that still sit in the condemning shadow of the law. God’s children, however, are not camped at the foot of Mt. Sinai but, as the author of Hebrews says, have come to “mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God...And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel” (Heb. 12:22-24). Here in Zion, God teaches with His grace gospel.

One very telling incident, which often comes to mind, is when the Prophet Elijah was on Mount Horeb. God showed His power to him in the mighty happenings in nature. To Elijah the battle against ungodliness had seemed hopeless. He had become depressed and weary. He felt he was alone in the battle and was tired in his duty. He had fallen to the right hand side of the way and journey. He had grown in himself. The Apostle James tells us that, “Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are” (James 5:17).

The Bible tells us what happened on that mountain: “The Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord.” It had to have been a mighty force of nature, as these winds broke into pieces the solid stone of the mountain. “But the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: After the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still, small voice.” (I Kings 19:11-12)

Elijah, who had done some miraculous deeds during his lifetime, was shown that the faith of a child of God is not strengthened through experiences that are shocking and cause emotions to surge. Rather he received it, just as you and I do today, from the sweet preaching of the gospel, from the quiet murmur of the wind, the still, small voice of God. The loving voice of God encouraged Elijah, “Go return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus...” I Kings 19:15. When he returned, the Bible testifies, Elisha then ministered unto him.

Some two thousand years ago, at the beginning of the New Testament era, God, who had formerly spoken through His prophets, now spoke to mankind through His Son, our Lord Jesus. The writer to the Hebrews began his letter thus: “God who at sundry times and in diverse manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.” (Heb. 1:1-2)

In the words of Jesus we also hear the same loving exhortation, the still, small voice of God. The gracious words of Jesus encouraged and comforted the former saints. The sweet, loving voice of God encouraged and exhorted believer and unbeliever alike. Many heard the call to repentance and the grace of repentance was granted to all who heard and believed.

How then was and is living faith preserved in those who have received it? Jesus promised that He and the Heavenly Father would not leave us orphans in this world: “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.... the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” (John 14:16, 25.) The Father has sent us the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead, to continue to uplift and comfort, instruct and proclaim His forgiveness to us.

Jesus calls the Holy Ghost the spirit of truth and says, “Howbeit when He, the spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth...” (John 16:13). It is because the Holy Spirit operates in the congregation of God that the Apostle Paul is emboldened to call the congregation of God “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15). Jesus reminds us, dear brothers and sisters, to hear what God says to us through His Spirit: “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches” (Rev. 2:7).

The Battle Against Reason

We as people, tend to rationalize various issues. So did the disciples on the way to Emmaus. As they walked they debated the events of Jesus’ suffering and death. Jesus approached them as they walked and asked them what it was they were talking about. “Their eyes were holden that they should not know him” and it becomes clear why. Although Jesus had long prepared them for His suffering, death, and resurrection, their reply to His question shows that reason had overwhelmed faith and doubts destroyed their hope: “But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel” (Luke 24:13-21). Certainly we, dear brothers and sisters, ourselves so often slow to believe, understand their doubts.

Jesus gently rebuked them and then with God’s undying word comforted and instructed His doubting and rationalizing disciples: “O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:25-27).

God also instructs us wavering ones. Solomon, in the Book of Proverbs, tells us how we are taught, how we are given understanding, knowledge and wisdom: “My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom and apply thine heart to understanding. Yea if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord giveth wisdom; out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding” (Prov. 2:1–6).

The voice of the Holy Spirit is unerring; it is the voice of our Heavenly Father. Jesus has said, “Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice” (John 18:37). It is important for us to humbly hear what the Spirit says. There is a reason why Jesus took a child into His lap and said, “Verily I say unto you, except he be converted, and became as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 18:3-4). The son of Sirach also preciously reminds us to humbly seek godly wisdom: “If thou love to hear, thou shalt receive understanding: and if thou bow thine ear, thou shalt be wise” (Eccles. 6:23). And the Apostle Peter reminds us to be, “As newborn babies, desiring the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious” (1 Pet. 2:2-3).

Jesus warned His disciples, “Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The Spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak” (Mark 14:38). We have also experienced how the Spirit is ready but our flesh is weak. There is a daily battle between the Spirit of God within us and our sin-corrupt flesh. We also must deal with the influences of the world, which is in continuous turmoil around us. Satan is so close to us. He knows he does not have much time and is “seeking whom he may devour.” It is for that reason again that the Word of God encourages us, “Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion walked about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). Satan desires to devour the believer. That is his work. He tries to sow confusion in our midst around various matters. How easily we begin to needlessly rationalize and reason around these issues.

If we look back several generations, we see the work that Satan has done. In seeing it, we comprehend the importance of hearing God's Word, believing it, and doing it. Our Heavenly Father encourages and warns us, “Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come they they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things” (2 Timothy 4:2-5).

This is what has happened when heresies have left. Watchfulness has ceased. Sound doctrine has not been endured. Hearing the pure, true Word has become difficult to the itching ears of many. Satan confused many in the kingdom of God and confusion overcame them because the place of a child had been lost. The heart of a child had ceased to exist.

Many times we may become confused over some issue. No man has all understanding and all knowledge, but when we remain in the place of a child, 'desiring the sincere milk of the word,' God will preserve us in His congregation. He grants us understanding according to His will, through His word, in His time.

Confession is a precious grace privilege, of which Luther said, "I would not give it up for all the treasures in the world." Yet Satan does his best to confuse us on this issue and in this way deprive us of it. How quickly he would have us mired down in the deceiving bogs of imagined righteousness. There on the right hand side of the way and journey this grace gift is turned into a work and demand, where one is dried and demanding. Satan doesn't give up quickly. If he can't cause our thoughts to go to the right, then he begins to pull to the left side of the way. There we begin to rationalize in permissiveness and leniency. The flesh quickly deems no need for confession and gladly throws it out altogether. Satan uses many other issues to continually trouble us as well, for example, birth control and marriage issues, movies, music, and other entertainment, and so on. He is continually hurling his fiery darts at us, tempting us with the pressure of popular opinions and the enticing teachings of this world. God's Word assures us: "Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him" (Prov. 30:5).

Satan sows confusion, yet God's word is so clear and precious. We also need to remember: "the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Cor. 1:25). The wisdom and understanding of God is in our midst, even in the most difficult situations. How comforting it is for us, God has promised He will never forsake us. He has promised, I will lift and I will carry. No matter what Satan places before us, we are safe and secure here in God's kingdom when we remain in that place of a child.

Dear brothers and sisters, hear the reassuring words recorded in Ecclesiasticus: "Ye that fear the Lord, believe Him; and your reward shall not fail...Look at the generations of old, and see: Did ever any trust in the Lord, and was confounded? Or did any abide in his fear, and was forsaken? Or who did he ever despise, that called upon him? For the Lord is full of compassion and mercy, longsuffering, and very pitiful, and forgiveth sins, and saveth in time of affliction" (Eccles. 2:8, 10, 11).

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith unto the churches" (Rev. 2:7). So we desire to hear, and to endure, and to believe.

George Koivukangas