



A V o i c e F r o m T h e W i l d e r n e s s

My Sheep Hear My Voice

Do these words spoken by our Saviour still apply? Can we who live in this degenerate age expect to recognize His voice? And not only recognize His voice, but differentiate between His voice and the voice of a stranger? See John 10:4-5. Yes, we can and will know His voice, if we are willing to listen in God's appointed way.

There are three ways that God's voice is heard and through which His will is made known to us. First, through **His Word** - See Psalms 119:102. Then through **His providential workings** - see Genesis 45:5-8. And finally through the Holy Spirit making **impressions** upon the heart - I Kings 19:12 & 5T 512. God's revealed word is always to be consulted first when questioning any subject and must remain the test of any **providence or impressions** before these two additional avenues are trusted. An experience in my own life may well demonstrate how these

three avenues work together in hearing God's voice and following His will.

When our family was making the move from our suburban home to our present location in the mountains of Montana, we passed through many circumstances which tested and strengthened our faith and trust in God. There are many experiences I could share, but one set of circumstances stands out as illustrating how we can know our Shepherd's voice.

As we left Illinois, we had three weeks to find the property that we were assured God would show us. Yes, we had three weeks to cover four states - Montana, Idaho, Washington and Oregon, but we had the assurance from **God's Word** saying, "I will guide thee with Mine eye." Psalms 32:8. We believed that the promise of Isaiah 42:16 was also for us. "And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they had not known; I will

make darkness light before them, and not forsake them." Because we had cooperated with God in every way we could, we claimed these promises as meant for us. Now, how would **God's providence** reveal His will to us?

We planned to stay with friends over-night part way through, on our trip to the west, but after the supper meal both Alane and I felt constrained to leave and drive straight through to Montana. Little did we realize the importance of that decision. Instead of meeting the Hohnberger family at their home in northwest Montana, we met Jim at the real estate office, he was affiliated with. There he introduced us to the owner of the company, who had another appointment, but wanted to at least be cordial and meet us. As we discussed why we had left the city and what we felt God was calling us to, He said, "I think I have a position in our company and an opportunity for you to meet your goals." Our five minute cordial greeting ended about 55 minutes later with the offer to specialize in selling country property in a quiet mountain valley. Do you see how **God's providence** works out His purposes for us?

But if this was really God's plan, He would have to show us the right piece of property. Was this where God was leading us? That weekend the Hohnbergers came over and we spent the weekend camping out together - (Our family of 5 including a six week old son had been living out of the back of our pick-up with a cap on it, to conserve funds) - for a special Sabbath of prayer and searching of God's will. On Sunday morning we circled an approximate ten square mile area on our map and Jim and I started driving down every road, searching for any property

that looked interesting - for sale or not.

That day God led us to the property but the people were not interested in selling the piece that we thought would work for us. The next day I returned with my family by the owner's invitation and God showed His hand again. I asked Don if he would just show me the property, even though he didn't want to sell it, and he agreed. As we were crossing the road

just ready to enter the property I had a strong **impression** - "Talk to this man as though this will be your property." The **impression** was so strong and **God's providence** thus far so clear that I dared not refuse. So as we walked into a small area that was sub-irrigated I said, "This would be a good place for our garden." Don seemed as though he did not hear me, but the same **impression** came back again. So as we walked further through the property, we came to a

clearing and I stood up on a stump looking west and said, "This would be a great building site for our home." At that moment he came alive and talked with me as though I were a son and excited about what we would do together. He said he was willing to consider selling but didn't know if his wife would - she made the big decisions. They told us to go to our campsite and give them two days to discuss it. That night as we were kneeling in prayer, I closed my prayer by saying, "Lord, You can move their hearts if this is Your will. Just as the prayer ended we heard a knock, it was Don & Sis. They wanted to talk. They invited us for breakfast the next morning to give us their answer. I told my wife, "Now don't get your hopes up unnecessarily, even if they do say yes, remember we have only X amount of money to spend on property. If this isn't the place God will have a

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better one and our faith will be strengthened." Well friends, they did say "yes" and told us we would have to pay exactly the amount we had, not a dollar more or less. We had seen the three ways in which we can hear His voice and know His will - through **His Word, His providence and impressions**. Then, six months later God gave us one more unasked for token of His favor in our decisions. We were with Don and Sis one evening and Sis said, "Do you really want to know why we sold you the property?" She said, "About ten years ago I had a dream and I saw a young husband and his wife with three young children and they wanted to buy our property. I didn't see their faces, but you are that family." The thought of that sends a thrill through me. Friends, God says, "Before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." Isaiah 65:24. The full story is available in the series - "Why Country Living."

Do you grasp the import of how God wants to work out His will for us? **His providences** were being prepared for us before I even had a wife! How many times have we missed God's purposes for our lives because we either don't know the voice of our Shepherd, or we are unwilling to hearken to His voice?

I will discuss three basic reasons why I believe many of us have difficulty knowing God's will for us personally and why confusions arise regarding the workings of **providence and impressions** from the Holy Spirit.

1) Lack of time assimilating **God's Word**. I used the word assimilating because like the food we eat, we only benefit from the portion that becomes part of us, while we say that this Word is "a lamp unto my

feet and a light unto my path." How much time are we really spending getting directions for the day? Too often I have come to God's Word as a source to sustain opinions for "strife and debate" rather than as a sinner, helpless against the flesh without the remedies of God's Word ministering to my weak condition by grace. Friends, we need time in God's Word and we need to go to His Word in an attitude of willingness to be changed and subdued, regarding it as "the voice of God speaking directly to you (me)." 7 Testimonies 205.

2) Personal prayer and communion with God. Here lies another reason why we don't recognize the voice of our Shepherd. How is it with our personal prayer time? Is it crowded out, or is the mind so distracted with other thoughts that there is no stillness of the soul to receive counsel from our God and Father? In Desire of Ages 363 we are told that, "we must individually hear Him

speaking to the heart. When every other voice is hushed, and in quietness we wait before Him the silence of the soul makes more distinct the voice of God." Friends, are we allowing our souls to become silent enough to hear the voice of God, or is it more of us telling God what is on our minds with our own preconceived ideas of His will, not waiting for counsel and direction for our day? Prayer is the "breath" of the soul and **God's Word** is our "lamp" for our feet. Is it any wonder that our Christian experience is almost suffocated and we are so prone to stumble on the path?

3) Unwillingness to seek His will or a hardening of the heart against doing what has been revealed is the last area. This is very common to each of us and we face it every day. Sometimes the most difficult

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part of this area can be an unwillingness to "neutralize the will." It is said that the disciples remained on their knees until they had no will of their own. We too must remain with God until He works this change in us also. I spoke with someone recently and he said, "I haven't really decided if I'm ready for God to show me His will, I'm being pulled in one direction in my own humanity." In essence as we talked, what he was saying was God can't begin to show me His will through **His Word, providence and impressions** because I haven't decided if I'm ready to hear it yet. It's easy for us to say I want to do God's will, but when it chafes against "self" it becomes difficult at times to hearken to His will.

This process of "neutralizing the will" can be very difficult. Why? Because it means that when I'm asking for God to show me His will, He may show me something, in myself that is blocking me from knowing and doing His will. Such as; some "restitution" which God specifically wants me to take care of, with someone else, in order to clear the way for God to reveal his will. If we stifle the voice of conscience, we are placing ourselves where it becomes more difficult to discern the voice of God or His will for us. Until we yield up that selfish, stubborn will, until we surrender "self" fully to really know and do the will of God, there is no peace to be found in the soul.

The sad result of weakness in these three areas brings difficulty in distinguishing the voice of God, because we have not accustomed ourselves to the principles of operation revealed through His Word. Then, because of the lack of truly feeding upon God's Word and communing with Him through prayer it becomes easier for us to begin relying upon "**impressions**" and so called "open and closed doors" which are tested all too often by feelings, emotions and experience, rather than the principles of God's

Word.

Friends, "Christ is ever sending messages to those who listen to His voice." Ministry of Healing 509. But listening to His voice means to hearken to all that He is revealing to us in **His Word** and testing the **providence and impressions** by **His Word**.

May God help each of us as we cooperate with Him to make the necessary adjustments in our busy lives so we will distinguish His voice from the voice of a stranger. John 10:4-5. God says to each of us, "And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, this is the way, walk ye in it." Isaiah 30:21. As a result of spending time in His Word and prayer we will recognize the voice of our Shepherd who says, "My sheep hear My voice ... and follow Me." John 10:27.

A Voice From The Wilderness

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