

# Hearing the Voice of God

Heeding The Voice Of God - Pastor Roger Ridley  
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I talked with a young man who said that both his parents and grandparents were Christians. Throughout his life they tried to teach him the Word of God, to know Jesus Christ, and to live for Him. But as soon as he was 18, he left home and chose not to live that way.

In our previous two meetings, we have talked about the voice of God. From Scripture we have learned that it is readily available to us today. If you want to hear God's voice, you can. But there is a necessary companion. Once we hear, we should also heed God's voice. That's where most of us get into trouble.

Isaiah 53:6 says, "*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.*"

Like the young man I mentioned, even though God's voice is freely available, when we hear it, we often choose not to heed it.

I want to share with you today **three lessons** concerning what happens when we hear, but do not heed the voice of God.

## **I. We Heed Other Voices.**

Lesson # 1. When we do not heed God's voice, we heed other voices.

Adam and Eve were the first to hear God's voice and not to heed it. Look with me at Genesis 2:15-17...

Adam and Eve were perfect, made by the hand of God. And God placed them in the perfect environment of the Garden of Eden. His instructions to them were as clear as could be: *It's all yours. All you have to do is take care of it. I have only one restriction. Under no circumstances are you to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.*

There was no way for Adam and Eve to misunderstand, but we all know what happened. Look at Genesis 3:1-6...

One of the most tragic decisions that anyone of us can make is to turn a deaf ear to God. At that moment we give Satan's voice a place instead.

Isn't it interesting, when we think about our own lives and God's provision, how Satan points to the one thing we have no business doing - and we listen.

In Genesis 3, Satan spoke through a snake. Today he is not so limited. He uses the educational system, the media, friends, and influential people in our lives to distract us from, and to take us in a different direction than the voice of God.

Every one of us, everyday, hear 1000's of messages telling us what's best for us. And unless we keep focusing on God's voice, we'll get caught up with these other voices that Satan is using.

A number of years ago I took a youth group on an overnight retreat. That night we played a game. We set up an obstacle course. We then blindfolded one of the teens and told him if he would listen to my voice I would guide him through the course. What he did not know was that all along the course the other teens would shout different directions. When he finished he said it was hard because he kept wanting to listen to the other voices.

That's the way it is with God's voice in this world. There's a lot of obstacles and a lot of other voices along the way, but if we keep listening to God's voice, we'll make it.

After the death of Moses, I like what God said to Joshua. Look at Joshua 1:7-9...

*In other words: As long as you listen to Me, you are going to be okay. Don't get distracted along the way and listen to someone else.*

As long as we are tuned into the voice of God, we'll see clearly what is right and wrong, what is moral and what is not, what is spiritual and what is not. We'll see the issues of life, in general, better. But when we listen to other voices we are quickly deceived. Satan is the father of all lies, he is crafty and cunning, he knows how to manipulate the truth.

When Eve began tuning out God's voice and tuning in Satan's, she was quickly deceived, and it wasn't long before she ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

When you and I listen to any other voice but God's voice, whether He is speaking to us through the preaching of His Word, the advice of a parent, the encouragement of a friend, or by His Spirit to our spirit, when we listen to any other voice, then we are headed for trouble. We start rationalizing, we start making excuses, and we find ourselves doing the very thing we know we should not do.

Throughout the New Testament, Jesus is repeatedly quoted as saying, *If anyone has ears to hear with, let him hear.*" (Mark 4:9; 4:23; 7:16)

Today, are you listening to God's voice?

## **II. We Make Wrong Choices.**

Lesson # 2. When we do not heed God's voice, we make wrong choices.

Now that sounds simple enough doesn't it? Why then do we do it?

Simply because we think that we know better than God a lot of times.

Although God's Word clearly says that a host of things are wrong for us, we get to thinking that if only God knew of our situation He would say that it was okay. Or, we get to thinking that God is holding back from us in some way. I've done that, and I'm sure you have too.

Satan told Eve in Genesis 3:5, *"For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."*

In other words - *God is holding out on you.*

What Satan did not tell Eve was - *You're going to hate the day you ever learned about evil.*

Wouldn't each of us agree that we have learned some things in life we wish we had never learned? That we've made some choices that we wish we never would have made?

When we fail to heed what we hear of God's voice, then we make wrong choices.

Every *"thou shalt not"* in the Bible is a promise of God's protection. He is always looking out for our best interest. He is not preventing us from enjoying life, instead, He is preventing us from destroying ourselves, and placing ourselves in a position where we cannot enjoy life.

You see, God does know our situation. He is omniscient. He knows everything from beginning to end. He knows what is best for us. He knows what is right for us. He knows what is wrong for us.

Look at Psalm 139:1-6...

What David said concerning God's knowledge of him, you and I can also say. Our heavenly Father does know our situation. How foolish then to choose apart from Him. Whenever we do, we make choices that appeal to the flesh: our sinful desires.

Genesis 3:6 says, *"And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat."*

1 John 2:16 says, *"For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."*

Those are the areas that Satan appealed to in Eve. And those are the same areas that he appeals to in us.

Satan does not appeal to our thirst for righteousness, to our hunger for God, to our desire to hear God's voice, or to our desire to heed His voice. Satan appeals to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

Whenever you and I fail to both hear and heed the voice of God, then we're going to hear other voices that appeal to those areas, and we're going to make bad choices.

The young man I referred to at the start of this message, from age 18, when he left home and chose not to heed the voice of God, until age 21 when I talked with him, had been arrested 12 times. Bad choices marked his life.

Whether we've ever been arrested or not is beside the point. What is the point, is that whenever you and I do not heed the voice of God our life is going to be marked by wrong choices.

### **III. We Suffer The Consequences.**

Lesson # 3. When we do not heed God's voice, we suffer the consequences.

Galatians 6:7-8 tells us, *"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."*

There is always a price to be paid for sin. Look with me at Genesis 3:8-19...

When Adam and Eve began listening to a different voice than God's, they made a bad choice, and immediately began to experience the consequences.

The first was in their fellowship with God. God came walking in the garden in the cool of the day and called out to Adam and Eve. Apparently it was their custom to walk and talk together. But Adam and Eve hid. They were afraid. What was a free, open, and enjoyable relationship was ruined. Adam and Eve didn't see themselves the same as they did before. And they didn't see God the same either. The moments of innocence they had enjoyed would never be there again. I would add that God's relationship with them, out of necessity, changed as well.

In Genesis 3:11 He asked...

God never asks us a question in order to gain information. He knows already! He questions us in order to gain a confession. And I'm so glad that He does provide that opportunity. Aren't you? 1 John 1:9 says...

On this occasion though, instead of a confession, what God received from Adam and Eve were excuses and finger pointing. *It's not my fault, Eve gave me the fruit, and by the way, You are the One who gave Eve to me.*

The moment you and I start making excuses, and start pointing our finger at others for what we have done, we need to stop right there. That's when we need to start confessing. Because that is a sure sign that we have not heeded the voice of God. It is a sure sign that we have acted independently of Him. And that's why we are in trouble.

God did not hear their excuses, or their finger pointing. And He doesn't hear ours either. Instead, He went on to spell out the consequences of their sin. Life was going to be a lot more difficult. Their environment would not be so perfect anymore. In fact, they would be put out of the garden.

When you and I fail to heed God's voice, we lose out on the very best that God has for us ( For two more examples, see Numbers 14; 1 Samuel 15). When we fail to heed God's voice we always end up with less than His best for our lives.

There is another consequence to Adam and Eve's sin that we need to consider. Romans 5:12 tells us, "*Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*"

Adam's sin affected the rest of mankind. Too often, I've heard this statement, "*I'm not hurting anyone else but myself.*" That is never true. Whenever you and I fail to heed the voice of God, somebody else always gets hurt: family members, friends, people we don't even know that watch us.

And then, of course, a final consequence of Adam and Eve's sin was death. They both died just as God had promised.

James 1:15 says, "*When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.*"

Make no mistake about it, when we fail to heed the voice of God there are consequences: a loss of fellowship with God, a loss of His best in our lives, a loss of effectiveness, instead of helping, we hurt others, and there is the loss of life.

The book of Hebrews is characterized by the repetition of this phrase, "*Today, if you will hear God's voice, do not harden your heart.*" (Hebrews 3:8; 3:15; 4:7) The clear implication is that we need to both hear and heed God's voice. If we don't, then we're going to listen to other voices, we're going to make some wrong choices, and we're going to experience the consequences.