

## Tuning In To God: 4

### The Inner Witness

Last week were looking at the theme of communion and fellowship with God through the Holy Spirit as the basis for us hearing from God.

“ (3) .... the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. (4) And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. (5) Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers..... (27) My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” **John 10.3-5, 27**

Jesus said that His sheep hear His voice, they know His voice, they follow Him because they know His voice – it is a familiar voice and they will not follow any other voice.

Knowing the difference between the voice of God and other voices comes from being familiar with the voice of God. As His children we become familiar with God's voice by spending time with Him and reading His word, and allowing God to speak to us from His word by the Holy Spirit.

This is the relationship we have with the Holy Spirit. Part of His ministry to us, as the children of God, is to teach us, to lead and guide us into the truth.

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” **John 14.26**

“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. (14) He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. ” **John 16.13-14**

#### Inner Witness of the Spirit

When we read the word of God, the Holy Spirit brings it alive to us and ministers it to us. This is God speaking, we are hearing from God. But another way the Holy Spirit speaks to us is through what we call the ‘inner witness’ of the Spirit. Again, and I repeat it, the Word of God is our benchmark and what the Spirit witnesses in our inner man must agree with what the word says.

Romans 8.14-16

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. (15) For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." (16) The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,”

These few verses tell us that those who are sons of God are led by the Spirit of God and

He does that by bringing us into fellowship with the Father and by bearing witness with our spirit.

'bear witness' is to testify, agree, confirm, give evidence to the truth.

- We have just read that the Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth.
- Since we are being led by the Spirit of God we should expect Him to lead and guide us into the truth.
- We shouldn't wait and expect a voice from heaven – the Holy Spirit ministers (impression, knowing, sense, 'gut feeling') to our spirits and our conscience. He bears witness **with our spirit**.

**"I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit" Romans 9.1**

When the early church were seeking a word of direction from God, the Bible tells us that they had a sense of what the Lord was saying:

#### **Acts 15.22-34**

**"(22) Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely, Judas who was also named Barsabas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren.... (25) it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul.... (28) For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things:... (34) However, it seemed good to Silas to remain there." Acts 15.22, 25, 28, 34**

The disciples sensed (it seemed good) that these things were from the Lord – "it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us"

#### **Acts 16.6-10**

**"Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. (7) After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. (8) So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. (9) And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." (10) Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them."**

The Holy Spirit did not speak to them in an audible voice forbidding them to go to certain places but the inner witness with their spirit. Then Paul had a dream – and they concluded (the witness in the spirit) that God was leading them to Macedonia.

#### **2 Corinthians 2.12-13**

**"Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I did not find Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I departed for Macedonia."**

Paul felt uneasy in his spirit, the prompting of the Holy Spirit, telling him to move on.

In all these instances these references are to the Holy Spirit speaking to them, bearing witness in their spirits.

In Troas Paul had a vision in the night, a dream, inviting him over to Macedonia. So does God use dreams and visions to speak to us – yes, of course, but the primary way is through the Word of God and the leading (inner witness) of the Holy Spirit. Notice that they didn't go to Macedonia because he had the dream but because the leading of the Holy Spirit – they concluded the Lord was leading them.

### Fleeces, Signs and Physical Manifestations

So what about other ways, like signs etc.

**Urim & Thummim** - In the Old Testament when people wanted to hear from God, they went to the priest and consulted what was known as the Urim & Thummim.

“And the governor said to them that they should not eat of the most holy things till a priest could consult with the Urim and Thummim.” **Nehemiah 7.65**

What these were and how they were used is not exactly known among scholars. They appear to be either the stones, or an addition to the stones of the breastplate worn by the priest. Their name means 'Lights and Perfections' and were used to give revelation and understanding on matters, and the will of God was ascertained by them.

**Gideon's Fleece** – In the book of Judges we read about Gideon. In an attempt to test the voice of God he set before the Lord a fleece from a sheep and asked God to confirm His word -

“So Gideon said to God, "If You will save Israel by my hand as You have said— look, I shall put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor; if there is dew on the fleece only, and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that You will save Israel by my hand, as You have said." And it was so. When he rose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece together, he wrung the dew out of the fleece, a bowlful of water. Then Gideon said to God, "Do not be angry with me, but let me speak just once more: Let me test, I pray, just once more with the fleece; let it now be dry only on the fleece, but on all the ground let there be dew." And God did so that night. It was dry on the fleece only, but there was dew on all the ground. ” **Judges 6.36-40**

**Casting Lots** - Just after Jesus ascended to His Father, the disciples were left praying. They wanted to find a replacement for Judas. They had a few men in mind and consulted God by casting lots.

“And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.” Acts 1.26

Like these disciples, too often we look for tangible things to direct our spirits. We may not cast lots but we seek signs from God, we test Him with a fleece.

All of the examples given above were before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. After Acts 2 we do not read of the believers/brethren using these means of discernment – the two are not compatible. They may have had visions/dreams but they didn't ask God for a sign.

“For we walk by faith, not by sight. ” 2 Corinthians 5.7

Our leading comes from what we believe, through faith. It is not based on things we see.

“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.” Romans 8.7

“[That is] because the mind of the flesh [with its carnal thoughts and purposes] is hostile to God, for it does not submit itself to God's Law; indeed it cannot. ” (Amp)

We do not base our hearing from God on tangible things – we have the Word of God and the inner witness of the Spirit. We walk by faith in the Word of God.

Tangible things will only confirm what we already know from the Lord

The Holy Spirit will lead, guide and direct us