

VOICES, WORMS *and* THE PROPHETIC MINISTRY

By Rodney W. Francis

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This book is dedicated to all those who genuinely and sincerely want to accomplish the vision and purposes of God for their lives in the 21st century through a greater understanding of the voice of God being recognized and obeyed in their lives and ministries, thus helping us to be the prophetic people He has called us to be.

Acknowledgements:

Unless stated otherwise, Scripture quotations are taken from the “New King James Version” (NKJV) of the Bible.

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Special thanks to my younger sister, Joan Emery, for her efforts in proofreading this book.

In today's world a number of English words have a different meaning to when they were used in the Bible. The breakdown of word meanings is included to help us understand the original meanings of a word used in the original Hebrew or Greek, thus bringing greater clarification of what the Word of God is saying to us. Many comments of appreciation have been expressed over the years for my doing this ~ *Rodney W. Francis.*

Forewords

Life is about relationships, and relationships are about communication. Our most important relationship is with God, and God speaks! But as Job reminded us (Job 33:14), we may not be listening. Many years ago the Lord had impressed upon my wife and I that we should sell our farm and embark upon Christian ministry full-time. It was confirmed by Scriptures that 'came alive' to us, and by the voices of friends who were bold enough to prophesy over us. But it was still only an impression, soft as the hoot of a distant train. Not without trepidation, we put the farm on the market and waited for further instructions, but there was silence from heaven. What were we to do? After nine months of anxious waiting I had a vision, so clear that I can remember all the details today, and in it we knew that we would be serving in evangelism overseas.

Two weeks later the call from Reinhard Bonnke came, and we were submerged into the impossible. But God carried us through, directing our paths with voices, words of knowledge and wisdom. And then came one night when in prayer a whisper said, 'It is time to leave this ministry and start your own.' 'Lord,' I replied, 'such a giant step needs a lot of confirmation.' 'No,' he replied, 'you must learn to obey the still, small voice.' So we resigned as Crusade Directors of one of the greatest ministries on earth today, and set out to change the world! God had other plans.

For five years we wandered through a spiritual desert, battling the thoughts that we had made a huge mistake. Then one day, when we had become desperate, we sat in a meeting, and a lady whom we had never met, stood to prophesy: "I think in this room there is someone called 'Fergusson' . . . Something to do with farming. You are wearing a pale shirt and blue trousers. You have just been worshipping with the multitudes." She then even mentioned the name of the pastor with whom we had been two weeks earlier in Nigeria. Wow! Now God had our attention! Surely now He would lead us out of the wilderness? But that was it! No instructions. No comforting words. Nothing! That night as I cried out to God about his being so unfair, he replied, "John, I have your name and address. I can call you whenever I want." Peace reigned in my heart once more. And true to His word, He later led us into different, undreamed of things.

Unless we hear His voice, we are nothing; we have nothing, and can do nothing of eternal value. As Rodney shows us in this timely and challenging book, we must know God well enough to recognize His voice, and obey His call. Somewhere above today's cocktail party of voices must carry clear the call of the One we love. And having heard? Obey we must, but it is not enough. Rodney's teaching here on WORMS should be essential reading for every believer, not just those with a "bent" toward the prophetic. Yesterday's manna will not do. "**Man does not live on bread alone,**" Jesus quoted, "**but on every word that comes** ['PROCEEDS' - KJV] **from the mouth of God.**" This PROCEEDING word is a river. It flows, and in it we find life, refreshing, strength. It is new every morning, vibrant and alive. Here is living water! Drink! ~ *John Fergusson* (JFMinistries, Ramarama, South Auckland, NZ). www.jfministries.org.uk

Uzziah was made king of Judah when he was sixteen years old. God gave him success as long as he sought the Lord. The Bible is very specific as to who influenced Uzziah to seek the Lord: ***He sought God during the days of Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear of God*** (2 Chronicles 26:5a, New International Version).

It is so critically important that we seek wise counsel and wise counselors. As long as Uzziah heeded Zechariah's counsel he won wars and rebuilt towns. He received tribute and fame. He fortified strongholds and built towns in the desert. He dug cisterns and increased agriculture. His army was well-trained and he created war machines and ancient weapons of mass destruction. He was greatly helped and became powerful. It was because he put into practice the wisdom of his advisor.

This life we have chosen to live is life in the Spirit. It is not an idea we can hold in our head, or a sentiment we can cherish in our heart. We need to work out its implications into every area of our lives. We do this by putting into practice the godly wisdom of our advisors.

Rodney Francis has worked out the implications of what he teaches into every area of his life. It's not head knowledge that he impresses upon you, but how to practically live out the truth of the Bible in your day-to-day life.

Have you heard the whispers in the wind? There is a growing movement to see the Kingdom of God not be a matter of talk, but of power. Followers of Christ are no longer paralyzed at the reality their experience has not reflected the expectation of Jesus when He said we would do even greater things than Him. They have repented of their powerlessness and are seeking wise counselors so they can actively live with the expectation that the God Who can do immeasurably more than they can ask or imagine will keep His promises.

As they listen to advisors with God's wisdom, they see success just like Uzziah. Rodney is such an advisor.

If you're interested to find out what happened to Uzziah, read 2 Chronicles 26:16-22 and take it as a warning for the future. Today you either return to the teachings of a wise counselor, or begin to allow a godly man to speak into your life. Rodney lays out how you apply God's truth to your life and the Holy Spirit teaches you all things, so I know, like Uzziah, you will be greatly helped. ~ *Trevor Lund* (Edmonton, Canada). www.ExpectancyMinistries.com

There are so many voices in the world today competing for our attention. It has never been more important than now to be able to discern the still small voice of God. I am pleased that someone like Rodney has written this book before I felt the urge to HAVE to write it!! There are so many Christians today who do not know that God is talking to them, but they are either not hearing Him, or they are simply being disobedient to His call on their lives. So many are living with fruitless, frustrated lives because they have missed what God has asked them to do. I hope that this book will encourage you to hear God's voice and inspire you to fulfil your destiny in Him. ~*Shaun Foster* (Senior Minister, Frontline Christian Church, Kerikeri, New Zealand).

Introduction

For a number of years I have been pursuing the Prophetic Ministry. It has opened all kinds of doors for me to minister the love of Jesus into the lives of people around the world. The Prophetic Ministry is all about our ability to perceive and discern the voice of God in whatever way it comes to us. God is speaking to His people today, and we need to learn how to recognize, and then respond, to that voice. The effectiveness and fruitfulness of our lives and ministries are directly related to our ability to perceive, discern and obey the voice of God to us. God speaks in many different ways, and it is in our best interests to be able to discover as many of those ways as we possibly can. Often we have been guilty of limiting the voice of God in our lives because we have restricted ourselves in accepting only narrow views and concepts of how God speaks. Some Christians only accept the Word of God (the Bible) as the voice of God. But is that the only way He speaks to us today? The answer is a resounding "No!" God wants to have the freedom to speak to us any way He desires ~ and we will still know it is Him. Therefore we have to become "sharpened" in our ability to perceive, discern and act upon that voice. This book seeks to help the sincere seeker of God to come to a greater understanding of the utter importance of our recognizing the voice of God in our lives today. Our future depends on it.

~ *Rodney W. Francis.*

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Chapter One:

WHAT MAKES THE DIFFERENCE?

I was very fortunate to be born-again in a church that believed in the reality of supernatural manifestations of the Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts operating today. It certainly helped me to be grounded onto a firm foundation where Jesus Christ was alive and real! At 18 years of age I clearly heard the voice of God speaking to me. One specific occasion was very special as it involved the Lord speaking His "Prophetic Foundation" into me for my life and ministry. To this day I can still remember every word that He spoke at that time: ***"If you will get to know My Voice, and will do what ever I ask you, there is nowhere in this world where you and I cannot go together, and we not be successful!"*** Those words so impacted my life that I have been seeking ever since to walk according to them. Now I can look back over many years and see that the wonderful hand of God has been leading and guiding me every step along the way to fulfil that prophetic word. Just four years after that word came to me **The Gospel Faith Messenger Ministry** was born and, over the years, has steadily grown to touch many thousands of lives in more than 90 nations. Through "thick and thin" the Lord has led and guided Jean and me. We have traveled the world, ministered to multiplied thousands of people through personal preaching, literature, books, Bible Correspondence Courses, E-Mail and Internet Ministries, Cassettes, CD's and DVD's. From our base we are constantly in contact with Christians and Christian leaders all around the world. And it is not over yet! More and more I receive requests for my books to be translated and printed in other languages; many thousands have been ministered to through my writings.

My education was not brilliant; I did not pass my main school examinations and I do not have any theological qualifications or degrees. Jokingly I tell people I did not need to go to Bible College because I was already married (some call them "Bridal Colleges") and thus my only reason for attending has been when I am invited to teach in them! I have had to trust in the Lord to get me through and, as

I have walked according to His “Prophetic Foundation” for my life, He has proved Himself to me again and again. I sincerely believe that if someone like me can make it in ministry ~ and impact the many thousands we do ~ then God can use anybody! **He can use you!**

- **What makes the difference? Hearing and obeying the voice of God!**

Earlier this year I was challenged by these words: **“Every great man and woman of God in the Bible was a total unknown ‘nobody’ until one event happened in all their lives ~ they heard the voice of God and responded to it!”** That was the one thing that separated them from all others. Abraham was no saint when he heard the voice of God in the idolatrous land of Ur of the Chaldees (Genesis 11:27-32; Acts 7:1-4). His family served other gods (Joshua 24:2, 14). Moses was no “successful evangelist” when God spoke to him at 80 years of age at the burning bush (Exodus 3). He had known the call 40 years earlier, but he made the mistake of believing the people would have understood his calling ~ which they did not ~ and as a result he had to flee to the land of Midian. In most people’s eyes he was an absolute failure. But God reduced him to a ‘nobody’ in order to turn him into a ‘somebody’!! (Acts 7:20-40). It is history now, but Moses delivered a whole nation from many years of slavery and bondage **according to the voice of God he heard at that burning bush!** Likewise, on the road to Damascus, a hard-hearted religious rebel called Saul of Tarsus had an encounter with the voice of God that changed his life forever! (Acts 9:1-22; Acts 22; and Acts 26:1-23). He became the Apostle Paul and, that one man, who became obedient to the voice of God, has impacted millions ever since. If that was so (and I believe it was and is), then we today need to give very serious consideration to this principle. For someone ~ anyone ~ to stake their life’s future on the hearing of a voice, an impression, a Scripture, an inner quickening, a picture, vision, dream, or however it comes to us, **then we have to be very sure that the source of that voice is God.** And that is why this message is so important for us right now. Did you take note of what turned those ‘nobody’s’ into ‘somebody’s’?

- **They heard the voice of God and responded to it with a positive action. They had to give themselves to God in such a way that God knew that they believed what He had said to them!**

This is one of the major principles that I have learned more about in recent years. When God speaks to us, we have to do more than “pray about it.” We Christians have been guilty of “praying about it” for years without the follow through of a demonstration to God of a positive action (on our part) that confirms we, too, are convinced that we heard His voice, and that it is right.

- **The voice of God is the very key to unlocking the truth to us!**

It is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to reveal and illuminate that truth to our understanding, but if we don’t heed it and “capture” it, then it is lost. If there is

one thing I have discovered over the nearly 50 years of my Christian ministry, it is that we are so prone to doubt the voice of God! The very thing that is able to take us from where we are to where we should be, and to be producing the kind of fruitfulness in our lives and ministries that God desires, has also become our greatest area of hindrance. **We seem to find it hard to be convinced by the voice of God.** As we shall find as we progress through this book, there are many voices out there to discourage us from acting upon what we hear and receive.

- **It is not that God is not speaking ~ it is that we are not perceiving and then discerning the different ways by which He speaks to us.**

If we are not “sensitively and spiritually tuned” into hearing and recognizing God’s voice to us, we will be missing out on so much that He has for us. And if we are not hearing and perceiving the voice of God, then opportunity after opportunity is lost. New Testament Christianity is all about a walk and relationship with Jesus Christ Who is alive from the dead! And in my simple understanding of things, **living people speak!** So many Scriptures speak of the importance of hearing His voice. It is the **“Word of the Lord”** applied in our lives that produces the good fruit. To apply something means that first we have to receive, believe and give ourselves to it by a practical demonstration to God that we believe it is Him Who is speaking to us. In recent years I have discovered more and more that **every time God speaks to me I have to do something about it.** I have to demonstrate to God by my practical response and commitment to whatever He says that I believe that it is Him talking to me. And if it is Him talking to me ~ and I believe it ~ then I can stake my life on what He says!

- **God says it! I believe it! That settles it!**

This is the principle of faith. Faith only operates after we have heard the word of the Lord: **“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”** (Romans 10:17). The word “word” here is from the Greek word “rhema,” which means “a saying, speech, matter, thing” (Young’s); “that which is spoken, a sentence; saying, speech, discourse, a declaration, command or promise” (Bullinger’s). Faith is activated when we hear the voice of God, perceive and discern it as the voice of God, receive it into our heart, and then obey whatever He says to us. Even the Scriptures, unless they are personally inspired and quickened to us, will not produce the faith that the “rhema” word does.

The questions have to be asked: “Why do Christians not spend more time in discovering the principles of hearing the voice of God? Why do we allow the doubts to persist to the point that they rob us of so much of that which God has for us?” We know the devil’s work is to make us doubt. Since the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden ~ where he successfully used doubt to rob them of the fruit of the tree of life ~ Satan has been deceiving the human race through his sowing of doubts within us. But are we serving him, or God? Do we have to carry on doubting the truth of what God says to us? The answer is a loud, “No!”

So who (and what) has to change? We do. We have the freedom and power of choice, so let us make those choices that will see us rising from a 'nobody' to a 'somebody' because we have heard and "connected to" the voice of God. It is time that we demonstrated to God that we believe Him!

We often say in this ministry: "There is always somebody waiting on the other side of our obedience," meaning that the truth and power of God is not released through us until such time as we obey what God is already saying to us. This is a very important principle to have working in our lives. For this to happen on a regular basis, we have to be sensitive, willing, and available to do whatever God says. The responsibility lies with us to recognize the voice of God to us in whatever way it comes.

- **Far too often we limit the voice of God in our lives because of our narrow concepts of how He speaks. God wants us to so know His voice that He can speak to us in any way He chooses ~ and we will still know it is Him! When it comes to our hearing the voice of God, we are all on the same level in that not one of us knows what God is going to say to us next! Therefore, each time He speaks, it is a new challenge and opportunity for us to demonstrate to God our love and commitment to whatever He says. To live that way is very different from what we generally see as "the norm" of Christianity.**

A few years ago, I sensed the Lord spoke these words to me: ***"Right now around the world, many of My people are hearing My voice. But because they are not free enough in themselves, they always disobey Me."*** I have pondered these words often. And every time I think of them I know that that was God speaking. It is such a true statement. If you doubt that, just think of the many times when God speaks and we fail to obey because we think we are "too shy, cannot speak in public, what will the people say, what if I have got it wrong?" to name but a few of our excuses. I have learned that a love commitment to obeying the voice of God means that we can have no excuses! As long as we have an excuse for not obeying what God says to us, we are really saying we think we know better than God. And that is ridiculous. It means we are more self-conscious than we are God-conscious. It means that even though we may be hearing God's voice, we are still not free enough in ourselves to respond to whatever He says. Let us be finished with our excuses and enjoy the rest of our lives walking in obedience to His voice. We will be thrilled ~ and often surprised ~ as we have adventures in faith with Jesus! And people will always be blessed as a result of our obedience!

- **What makes the difference? It is the voice of God heard personally; then received, believed and acted upon. So simple ~ yet so challenging!**

Chapter Two

SO MANY VOICES

Every day we are bombarded with a host of varying voices, all clamouring for our attention. In the world they are nonstop, seeking to woo us this way and that. Advertising, Hollywood, New Age, Occult, Fantasy, Entertainment, Sport, Television, Radio, Cell phones, and many other things have become major players in the lives of millions. They are voices or “languages” ~ both good and bad ~ all seeking (sometimes demanding) our time and attention.

- **Every decision we make in life is the result of a voice heard, either audibly or silently within.**

Voices! They control us more than we realize. Therefore it is vital that we Christians quickly learn to perceive and discern the source of those voices and to only listen to that which will glorify God. Because something is good does not necessarily mean it is right for the Holy Spirit-filled Christian believer. The first king of Israel, Saul, **“spared the best of the sheep and the oxen, to sacrifice to the Lord . . .”** (1 Samuel 15), but that was not what God had asked of him. It cost him his anointing, his authority, and his kingship, because he listened to the voice of the people more than to the voice of God!

- **It is very important that we recognize, and listen to, the right voice!**

The Bible puts it this way:

“There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices (“phone”) **in the world, and none of them is without signification** (“aphonos” meaning “without sound or sense” – Young’s; “without sound or tone, without voice or cry” – Bullinger’s). **Therefore if I know not the meaning** (“dunamis” = “power, force; of language, the power or signification of a word” – Bullinger’s) **of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaks a barbarian** (“barbaros” = “foreigner, alien” – Young’s; “a coarse, insensitive or uncultured person” – Collins), **and he that speaks shall be a barbarian unto me”** (1 Corinthians 14:10-11, KJV).

The word “voice” in the Old Testament is translated from the Hebrew word “qol” meaning “to call aloud; a voice or sound, bleating, crackling, cry, proclamation, sing and yell” (Strong’s), and is written approximately 183 times there.

The word “voice” in the New Testament is translated from the Greek word “phone” meaning “a tone, an address (for any purpose), saying or language:- noise, sound, voice” (Strong’s); “any sound, noise, or voice” (Bullinger’s) and is written approximately 133 times.

I find it very interesting that these verses are placed where they are in the Bible, in the midst of Paul's teaching on the use of Spiritual Gifts in the church. The fact is that there are many voices operating within the church (as we know it), and there are also many voices vying for our attention in the prophetic. If we are not perceptive and discerning we can easily find ourselves caught up in teachings and unproven theories that all sound very good, but in reality they prove to be "time wasters" in that they produce little or no fruit. Some of those voices within the churches are anti prophetic, anti trusting Christians to hear from God for themselves, anti the supernatural of God in our lives in a personal way, but to mention a few.

- **If we do not recognize the source of the voice, we will give little or no heed to it.**

Our understanding cannot grasp the purpose of it. We then tend to ignore it, and as a result, we do not get the benefits of why it is sent. The prophetic ministry is a classic example of this. Because it is based upon an ability to hear and receive via the spiritual ear and eye, many Christians cannot grasp that realm very well (1 Corinthians 2). So they adhere to and function within the bounds of logical and analytical thinking, a theological approach. But that is not the way of faith, nor is it the way of the Holy Spirit. We are exhorted to develop the spiritual man that is now inside of us by the indwelling and eternal Holy Spirit. His work is to reveal more of Jesus to our understanding, to remind us of what He taught, and to guide us in the way we should go (John 14:15-31; John 15:26; John 16:7-15). If we try and build our lives without that revelation and help, then we are blocking out of our lives the very things that God wants us to live by. We will only achieve what natural talent and ability can produce. And that is very sad. We become robbed of a real faith walk with Jesus Christ that comes as a result of our following His voice. New Covenant Christianity is supernatural (by revelation) ~ not intellectual.

The Bible warns us: ***"Now the Spirit expressly ("explicitly") says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving ("seducing") spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own consciences seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth"*** (1 Timothy 4:1-3).

- **The Holy Spirit has a voice! And He speaks!**
- **He is the voice of truth!**
- **Know the source of the voice!**

And He (the Holy Spirit) warns us against seducing and deceiving spirits turning people's hearts away from the faith! The word "seducing" and "deceiving" comes from the Greek word "planos" meaning "wandering" (Young's); "an imposter or misleader; deceiver" (Strong's). Can it really be that Christians can so change from

the Biblical faith to the point where they finish up following the teachings of demonic spirits? According to the Holy Spirit they can! How do Christians get misled to the point they “wander away” from the faith and truth of the Gospel? **They listen to the wrong voices, or they fail to heed the true voice of Jesus through the Holy Spirit!**

- **Spirits talk! They have voices** (even multiple)!

It is of some concern to me to discover that more and more Christians are hearing voices that are not of the Holy Spirit ~ yet believing they are God. In recent times I have been involved with setting some Christians free from believing they are hearing and talking to the spirits of departed loved ones. Those deceiving spirits make those still alive believe that it is the voice of the departed dead ~ not realizing that it is a familiar spirit or spirits that has deceived them. In one such case the professing Christian said the voices told her that they would guide her, and therefore she would not need to read her Bible!! Some cultures experience these things more than others. Christians do need to be very careful and wise as to how much they allow their culture to govern their lifestyles, as some cultures are rooted into witchcraft practices, and practices like talking to the dead are quite acceptable. They may be acceptable in the culture, but they are not acceptable in the Kingdom of God. On a TV programme I watched, a woman described how she is fighting for her life because of anorexia. She has no desire to eat and is simply wasting away. She said it started when she heard a voice speaking to her! That voice deceived her, and now she is fighting for her life! I include these examples here to show you that these things can, and do, and are happening amongst some Christians today.

- **It is very important that we Christians get to know the source of the voice!**

I repeat ~ it is very important that we Christians get to know the source of the voice. **For if we do not know the source of the voice, how can we positively respond in obedience when it is the voice of God?**

- **Voices have to be discerned.**

We have to know how to respond to the many voices that seek our attention.

- **Whatever voice we give attention to is going to “demand” our time and attention to it.**

And if it is the wrong voice, then we finish up on a tangent that can rob us of the best that God has for us. It is our responsibility to seek to perceive, then discern the source of the voice, and then to respond to, or ignore, accordingly. This is such an important area of life that our future “success” or “demise” (spiritually) is determined by it.

The Bible ~ from Genesis to Revelation ~ is basically about one major message. That message is that God is speaking to mankind, and mankind needs to hear His voice, recognize what He is saying, and live with a commitment to obey the voice of God. Scripture after Scripture exhorts us of the importance of hearing and doing whatever God speaks.

- **It is in hearing, knowing and obeying the voice of God that separates true Christians from every other person on the face of the earth.**

Christianity is not about Bible knowledge, nor even about going to church, and living a good life. All those things can be done without a personal knowledge of God's voice in our own heart and life. What makes the difference is when we "connect" with the voice of God, and knowing that it is Him.

- **That voice supersedes every other voice on the face of the earth.**
- **No voice is more truthful, accurate, life-changing, creative or impacting than the voice of God!**

The voice of God will always be confirmed by the principles of Scripture, the Bible, which we call the inspired Word of God. But in saying this, I realize that there are now so many "questionable" translations and publications of what some call "the Bible" that discernment is necessary there also! I am not advocating that only one version is right (there are some who are convinced that only one is right).

- **The Prophetic Ministry is all about our ability to perceive and discern the voice of God as and when it comes to us, and then to do whatever He has said.**

This principle runs throughout the Bible. Until we apply what God has said, then we are not going to make very much progress in our Christian walk. That applying or doing is called obedience, which is another name for faith. Remember, **"Faith comes by hearing** ("akoe" = "the thing heard"), **and hearing by the word** ("rhema") **of God"** (Romans 10:17).

- **Action must happen once we have heard the word from God. Action is another word for faith and obedience.**

Consider this important statement of Scripture: **"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently** ("ekzeteo" = "to search out, i.e. figuratively, to investigate, crave, demand, seek after carefully" –Strong's) **seek Him"** (Hebrews 11:6).

“Faith” here is translated from the Greek word “pistis” meaning: “faith, faithfulness, steadfastness” (Young’s); “firm persuasion, the conviction which is based upon hearing, not upon sight or knowledge; a firmly relying confidence in what we hear from God in His Word” (Bullinger’s). We do have to demonstrate to God that we carry a conviction of that which He has spoken to us, and to translate that into the action of obedience.

Let me share just a few verses that demonstrate the importance of hearing and obeying God’s voice:

“In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice” (Genesis 22:18). This was God’s promise to Abraham. The blessing of Abraham ~ and the Abrahamic covenant ~ was all about our obeying the voice of God. This covenant is now in Isaac, Abraham’s son: ***Nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, “In Isaac your seed shall be called.” That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed”*** (Romans 9:7-8). In verse 10, Isaac is called our father. (See also Galatians 4:21-31; Hebrews 11:18). Why Isaac? Because Isaac represents **the voice (promise) of God heard, obeyed and fulfilled!**

- **The will of God can only be fulfilled in us today as we live by the same principles.**

“Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special (“segullah” = “select, precious, endeared; something exceedingly prized and constantly preserved” – Wilson’s) ***treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel”*** (see Exodus 19:1-9). This is what God spoke to Moses to share with the children of Israel. The conditions for God’s special blessings and protection were obedience to His voice. It is the same in the next quotation as well:

“Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the Lord your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you, and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the Lord your God . . .” (see Deuteronomy 28:1-14). If you read the whole chapter you will see that the remaining 54 verses are all the consequences of not obeying the voice of the Lord! Yes, there are consequences to ignoring and disobeying the voice of God once we have heard it.

John the Baptist was ***“the voice of one crying in the wilderness”*** (Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4; John 1:23). How did he become that voice? ***“The word*** (“rhema”)

of God came to John . . . in the wilderness” (Luke 3:1-20). What was the content of that word and voice? To repent, prepare the way of the Lord, and do the works of God. That can only be achieved by our listening to the voice of God and responding to it. John carried tremendous authority as he fulfilled the word that came to him from God. **“Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins . . .”** (see Matthew 3). Multiplied thousands flocked to him to be baptized in water! That is most likely a very conservative number, as I am told that in John’s day the population of the areas mentioned was three to four million. He carried something very powerful in the Spirit to draw the people like he did. And remember, water baptism was a whole new thing. No one had ever been involved with such a ministry as that before John ~ yet he had something (in God) that drew the people to him and they were publicly immersed under the water!

At the trial of Jesus, the religious leaders and people shouted out that Jesus be crucified: **“But they shouted, saying, “Crucify Him, crucify Him!” Then he (Pilate) said to them the third time, “Why, what evil has He done? I have found no reason for death in Him. I will therefore chastise Him and let Him go.” But they were insistent** (“epikeimai” = “impose, press upon” – Strong’s; “be urgent” – Bullinger’s), **demanding with loud voices that He be crucified. And the voices of those men and of the chief priests prevailed”** (Luke 23:21-23). The voices of the religious leaders and people over-rode the voice and authority of Pilate. Emotions and fervour forced Jesus to be crucified.

We are living in a day when there is arising a much more open opposition to the Word of God and those who state their belief in such. The spirit of anti-Christ is alive and well, working to silence **the voice** of those in touch with the Living Jesus. These are days when we must be strong and know how to re-act to this growing hostility. Be forewarned that the voice of the majority will often prevail over the voice of the minority Christians (who are prepared to live and die for their faith).

- **Is your personal relationship with Jesus strong enough to stand against the anti voices of the religious crowd?**

Jesus said: **“Everyone who is of the truth** (“aletheia” = “as the revealed reality, lying at the basis of, and agreeing with, an appearance; the manifested, veritable essence of a matter; hence, the reality appertaining to an appearance or manifestation, truth” – Bullinger’s) **hears** (“akouo” = “to hear, perceive with the ears, listen, to learn by hearing, be informed” – Bullinger’s) **My voice”** (John 18:37). Let us stop and meditate upon this statement for a moment.

- **Everyone who is of the truth hears the voice of Jesus! They hear what He says!**

- Truth is Jesus' voice revealed and manifested! Truth is determined by our ability to hear Jesus' voice! And Jesus said that the truth is liberating!

Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free . . . Therefore if the Son (Jesus Christ) makes you free, you shall be free indeed . . . I speak what I have seen with My Father . . . He who is of God hears God's words . . ." (see John 8:25-47 ~ the whole chapter is a sobering one).

At His baptism in water, Jesus experienced an open heaven and heard the voice of God: ***When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"*** (Matthew 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:16-21). These words were repeated at the Mount of Transfiguration: ***"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"*** (see Matthew 17:1-13). Notice on this occasion, that God added the words, ***"Hear Him!"*** Nothing has changed!

- There is still only one voice that is over and above every other voice on planet earth ~ and that is the voice of Jesus Christ the risen Lord!

It is in hearing and knowing the voice of God that opens heaven over our lives. If we are not recognizing the voice of God as and when it comes to us, then we are living under a closed heaven. In the account of Samuel "connecting" with the voice of God, at the beginning of 1 Samuel Chapter 3 there is a closed heaven ~ ***"the word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no widespread revelation*** ("chazon" = "vision, or dream; prophetic vision; oracle or prophecy" – Wilson's) ~ but at the end of the chapter heaven is opened again: ***Then the Lord appeared*** ("raah" = "to be seen, to show oneself, appear; vision as granted to the prophets; the vision of God" – Wilson's) ***again in Shiloh. For the Lord revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord.*** What made the difference was Samuel recognizing that the voice he had heard three times previously that night was actually the voice of God.

- Once he connected the voice with God, things immediately changed in the spiritual realm.

Through Samuel, Israel again heard the voice of God speaking to them. Today we must listen to Jesus.

- Hear Jesus!

“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me” (see John 10:1-30). Can Jesus make it any clearer than this? The followers and disciples of Jesus are those who develop an intimate relationship with Him through the hearing and obeying of His voice!

The voice of the Lord was instrumental in Saul’s conversion on the Damascus Road (see Acts 9:1-19; Acts 22:1-21; Acts 26:12-23). The voice of the Lord was the motivating force of his ministry. Consider what he says: ***“But I make known to you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation*** (“apokalupsis” = “divine disclosures, appearances, unveiling or uncovering of facts and truths”) ***of Jesus Christ”*** (Galatians 1:12, 15-16; Galatians 2:2).

Rhoda eventually opened the door to Peter (who everyone thought was still locked up in prison) because she ***“recognized Peter’s voice”*** (Acts 12:12-16). Rhoda did not respond to the knocking on the door until she recognized Peter’s voice.

- **She recognized his voice!**

The importance in recognizing and knowing the voice of God is shown in this next Scripture quotation, where ignorance of His voice caused actions that crucified Jesus Christ. Those who dwelt in Jerusalem, and their religious rulers, did not know the voice of God: ***“For those who dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they did not know Him, nor even the voices of the Prophets which are read every Sabbath, have fulfilled them in condemning Him*** (Jesus). ***And though they found no cause for death in Him, they asked Pilate that He should be put to death”*** (Acts 13:27-28).

Those rulers and their people were all versed in “Bible knowledge.” They were religious and faithful to their synagogues.

- **Week after week they heard the message of the prophets without any response or commitment to it.**

When it came to those things that really matter, they were found wanting. They were full of theology, but destitute of the truth! In many parts of the Christian world today theology is taking on more and more importance; so much so that to get into full-time ministry one has to practically always go through theological training. Maybe we should dare to ask the question: “Does theological training really prepare one for the ministry of Jesus Christ ~ especially when we read the Biblical accounts of how the great men and women got called and released into ministry?” I remember this saying: ***“God’s will, done in God’s way, will never lack God’s supply”*** (Author Unknown). We need to get back to the simplicity of the

Gospel of Christ, be filled with the Holy Spirit, and allow His Gifts and Fruit to flow out of us to impact an unbelieving generation!

- **It is one thing to be filled with Bible knowledge; it is entirely another to obey the voice of God.**

“Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts . . .” (see Hebrews Chapters 1 to 4).

I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, saying, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last,” and “What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.” Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters . . .” (see Revelation 1:8-20).

Notice in the above Scripture that the loud voice John heard when he was in the Spirit, when responded to and obeyed, caused him to see Jesus! The voice took him to a revelation of Jesus Christ.

- **When we are “in the Spirit,” two things usually happen: 1. We hear God’s voice, and 2. As a result of that voice, we “see” Jesus.**

To know the difference between truth and error, all we have to do is check to see if the voice we are hearing glorifies Jesus Christ and encourages us to draw closer to Him. **Any voice that does not exalt Jesus Christ into His rightful position is not of the truth** ~ and therefore is unable to help us in our preparation for eternal life. Jesus said: ***“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” . . . “The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father Who dwells in Me does the works” . . . “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it. If you love Me, keep My commandments . . .”*** (see John 14). Asking is using your voice!

- **Make sure you know the source of the voice!**

Chapter Three

WHEN MANNA TURNS TO WORMS!

One does not have to look too far today to see that our world, societies and cultures are being devastated by all kinds of religious practices and traditions. Everywhere we look there are religious uprisings by people who are convinced that “their belief” is the right belief. Sadly, some of these belief systems actually started out originally as a revelation from God. Most of our Christian denominations were founded on a revelation of a certain aspect of Scripture, and that revelation caused them to rise to prominence. However, as time has gone on, that revelation has become more of “a religious bondage,” rather than a release, to many.

The ways of God are that we be free to obey Him! Christianity is a daily relationship with the Living Jesus, Who is alive from the dead. The Living Jesus speaks! **Christianity is knowing Jesus Christ!** (John 17:3). It is personal, and it is serving Him on a day-to-day basis.

- **To serve someone means we have to get to know that person well enough to recognize his/her voice in order to carry out their instructions.**

Serving is fulfilling someone else’s desires. Christianity is all about serving the desires of Jesus in and through our lives. Once we get away from that simplicity of faith and trust, we then tend to drift into a state of religiosity. We do things habitually, and then traditionally. The life, power and joy of walking with Jesus disappear, and we then find ourselves bound into a set of beliefs that take us nowhere. We become entrenched.

That is why it is so important that we are filled with the Holy Spirit.

- **The Holy Spirit is the voice of God within us, to lead and guide us into all truth (which is Jesus), so we can freely and joyfully fulfil the pleasure of God.**

That’s how New Testament Christianity commenced: simple believers filled with the Holy Spirit and in love with Jesus Christ ~ **“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized they had been with Jesus”** (Acts 4:13). That’s how it started for us, too, but tragically, it is not how it is finishing for many. We can experience a revelation of God, but if we do not follow the instructions that revelation brings with it, then it can turn into a “snare and a curse” to us. **The heavenly manna turns to worms!**

In Exodus 16 God provided the Israelites with manna from heaven. It was called **“the bread which God has given you to eat”** (v. 15). That manna was given to sustain them for that day. Fresh manna was provided by God on a daily basis. But what did the people do? They tried to store it up, to hoard it, to find some other security in knowing that there was “sufficient for tomorrow,” etc. But the manna of God was not for storing up purposes; it was to be eaten on a daily basis. When they got away from the simple commands of God, they soon discovered that **“the manna from heaven”** very quickly degenerated into a stink ~ **“it bred worms** (“tola” = “maggots” – Strong’s; “a worm, especially such as is generated in putrid substances” – Wilson’s) **and stank”** (“baash” = “to smell bad; figuratively to be offensive morally; make to be abhorred, had in abomination, loathsome, odious, utterly stinking” – Strong’s) (v. 20). What a statement! What a difference! We need to consider what the Bible is saying here, for we would naturally ask, “How could it be that such a gift and revelation from God can be turned so quickly into something we would reject because of the way it turned out?” **We find it hard to equate that something from heaven could become worm-ridden and carry such an awful stench.** Yet, unfortunately, that is the way it can be. God wants us to live in such a way that our relationship with Him is a daily relationship, where He supplies us with that **“bread from heaven”** (revelation) of what He is wanting of us at this very present point in time.

- **We have to know His voice to live like that.**
- **What are we doing with that which God has spoken to us about?**
- **Are we obeying, or is it turning to maggots?**

In Deuteronomy 8, God tells us the reason why He sent manna from heaven to His people: **“So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord”** (v. 3, 16 ~ but read whole chapter).

Nehemiah 9:20 declares: **“You also gave Your good Spirit to instruct them, and did not withhold Your manna from their mouth.”**

Psalms 78:23-25 records: **“Yet He had commanded the clouds above, and opened the doors of heaven, had rained down manna on them to eat, and given them of the bread of heaven. Men ate angel’s food; He sent them food to the full.”**

MANNA WAS MIRACULOUS PROVISION FROM HEAVEN

The manna was a new thing. Their fathers knew nothing of that kind of provision. **It was miraculous provision from heaven.** God has always desired a people who would learn to trust Him, His ability, and His provision. **But they did not**

learn the lesson. They did not obey Him, and the heavenly manna turned to worms ~ maggots!

He longs for our lives to be a living testimony of the fact that a Living God lives within us! That way is learning to ***“live by every word that comes out of the mouth of God.”*** But we seem to always want to “do it our way.” We keep reverting to rules and regulations . . . to legalism ~ and those things do not change lives! I came across this saying recently: “Many folks want to serve God ~ but only as advisors!”

- **All revelation (even from God and heaven) ~ if not obeyed correctly ~ will soon breed worms and become a stink!**

When that disobedience happens, the revelation of God falls into disrespect and disrepute. Those with the “decaying” revelation do not close down their operations. No, they press on, believing that the revelation is right, no matter what! They do not recognize when “the smell,” and then “the worms,” take over! Then we wonder why the world looks at our organizations and smell a stench.

- **Our disobedience bred worms, and worms breed a stench.**

When Jesus was teaching the people, He boldly stated that the Israelites did not get the benefits of why God provided them with manna from heaven. He said: ***“Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead.”*** Then He taught that the word He shared with the people was the bread that comes down from heaven today: ***“I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever . . . As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down from heaven ~ not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever”*** (see John 6:28-71).

It is a very sobering thought to know that even though we may receive something from heaven, that unless we appropriate and respond in the proper way, **that it is possible for that life-giving revelation to become a “smelly death experience” inside of us.** What did Peter, James and John want to do on the Mount of Transfiguration when they were experiencing a revelation of Jesus and heavenly things? They wanted to build monuments to the occasion! (Matthew 17:1-13). Fortunately God over-ruled them! Otherwise the “manna” of that wonderful occasion would have turned to worms!

- **The Israelites of old ate bread from heaven, but died! Their heavenly experience did not change them enough to give them the benefits God wanted for them. All revelation from above is sent to enable us to grasp more of the ways of God, to lift us up out of earthly thinking and experiences into knowing that the ways of God are far different**

to ours. That is why we must have the Holy Spirit living inside of us, because He is God's way of revealing Jesus and heavenly truth to us. The Holy Spirit feeds us with that manna from heaven. It comes by revelation as we listen to what He says to us today.

Here is a question that every Christian needs to consider and answer:

“When we get away from the simplicity of being led by the Holy Spirit of God, what is our next option?”

The answer is that we become “programme orientated,” we set up rules and regulations to hold the people “faithfully” into what we believe (all in the name of good intentions). We become religious “in the name of Jesus,” because we believe we are doing His will by faithfully holding to “the tenets of the faith.” But we slip back into law and legalism, which only produces “death.” It all sounds good, but it does not produce that life of Jesus within which impacts the world and convicts them of their need of the Saviour! And, regardless of what the world and some theologians might try to tell us, there are not “many ways to God.” **There is only ONE WAY ~ JESUS CHRIST** (John 14:6; 1 Timothy 2:5). It is not the way of attending church meetings (and all that goes with that), nor even the music, emotional hype, good works, etc. (as much as we may enjoy those things).

- **It is our simple obedience to whatever Jesus tells us that really counts** (John 2:5).

Jesus very clearly told us that if we love Him we will obey Him (John 14:21, 23). I have learned (much more in recent years) that the sooner I obey whatever Jesus asks me, the sooner I see His promise fulfilled in and through my life.

The fact we start on this Christian journey is wonderful. But it is the way we continue unto the end that determines how real Jesus is in our lives! It is a very sad fact that many have started out well with a revelation and experience in Jesus Christ, but somewhere along the way things have happened, wrong voices have been listened to, decisions have been made, hurtful words have been spoken, unbelief sets in, **and the heavenly manna turns to worms, leaving a bad stench in the nostrils!**

The way we prove to God that Jesus is “Number One” in our lives is that we do what He asks us!

- **In order to “do,” we first have to receive the instructions ~ His instructions.**

NO ROOM FOR EXCUSES!

So, how do we receive His instructions? Here is the crunch, the real issue of where Christianity starts and finishes.

- **It is all about listening to Jesus, getting to know His voice, and then demonstrating our love to (and for) Him by our obedience to whatever He says!**

When we are committed in love to Jesus there is no room, whatever, for excuses. Excuses breed worms, and a stench. Excuses are a way of telling God that we know better than He . . . that He does not understand or know our situation, etc. The truth is He knows us all through and through, and knows exactly what He has saved us for, and desires us to accomplish while we are here on this earth. He did not save us to be bound up in a set of religious beliefs!

- **It is a simple lifestyle of receiving and enjoying God's daily manna/provision in our lives, and our fulfilling His purposes by our practical obedience to whatever He says.**

Remember, Jesus taught this principle of the manna as well: ***"Give us this day our daily bread"*** (Matthew 6:11). He wants us to have a daily reliance on His provision for us. That is what keeps our relationship with Him FRESH. Daily bread is fresh bread.

For too long we have "excused" ourselves from obeying God by religiously "committing it to prayer."

- **When God speaks it is usually time to obey!**

The sooner I obey, the sooner the vision/word of God is captured ~ in me! Once it is captured it can begin to produce good fruit for God's glory. Let us not make excuses, but know that we are here on earth for a certain period of time to do the Father's will.

- **If we do not get into the flow of simple obedience to the voice of God, our lives will soon produce worms and carry a stench that puts others off wanting to know Jesus.**

PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN TRYING TO HEAL A STINK!

When it comes to serving God and ***"knowing the truth that sets us free"*** (John 8:31-32), it all happens for us when we receive a revelation from the heart of God right into our innermost being. That revelation is ***"heavenly manna."*** There is only one way we can really respond to keeping the heavenly manna fresh, and that is to OBEY whatever that revelation tells us. God knows better than us, and He always gives us simple instructions as to how He wants us to handle that which He gives us.

- **It is always far better to OBEY GOD from the beginning than to disobey what He says, and then have to try and get the necessary “deliverance” from the worms/maggots that breed as a result of that disobedience.**

As we have learned in this message, the fact that we do receive a revelation from heaven (manna) is not a guarantee that that manna is always going to remain fresh within us. It all depends on how we respond to that revelation. When we try and do things our way instead of God’s way, then we will see worms and a stink starting to breed, which, in the end, actually destroys the revelation of God from bringing forth the fruit for which it was given. Most revivals come to a halt because man somehow “interferes with the purposes of God” ~ and we finish up with worms!

Let us learn the simplicity of the Christian life and message: **it is simply doing whatever Jesus tells us! No more and no less.** When we are committed to that simplicity of faith and life, then we will see the revelation of God coming forth to impact more and more people with the reality of the Risen Christ. And that revelation will transform them in time, and last throughout all eternity!

- **There is fresh manna from heaven for you and me every day! Fresh manna does not breed worms or carry a smell! Let us enjoy it in a God-glorifying way through our instant obedience to Him.**

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat . . .”
(Revelation 2:17).

“Whatever He (Jesus) says to you, do it” (John 2:5).

Chapter Four

DEVELOPING SENSITIVITY TO GOD’S VOICE

In order to recognize the many different voices enough to know what is God and what is not, it is very important that we develop a sensitivity to the voice of God ~ to know His voice when He speaks to us. Know the true voice and you will discern quickly the false voices when they come.

SAMUEL: What a difference it made in Samuel’s life when he connected to the voice of God ~ **and knew it was God** (1 Samuel 3). The whole nation knew that

something was happening in the spirit realm and that Samuel was **“established** (“aman” = “to build up or support; to foster as a parent or nurse; figuratively to render, or be, firm or faithful, to trust or believe, to be permanent or quiet; morally to be true or certain; steadfast, sure” – Strong’s) **to be a prophet of the Lord**” (1 Samuel 3:20).

- **There is something about true prophetic ministry that establishes us in the purposes of God like nothing else.**

And when we are established in the things of God, we can nurse, establish and mentor others through our recognition of, and obedience to, the voice of God. It should not surprise us, then, to know that the enemy of our souls, Satan, tries everything he can to make us doubt and disobey the voice of God. For when we are walking in obedience to God’s voice we are a real “thorn” in his side and we do immense damage to his kingdom! Samuel’s obedience to the voice of God was such that he influenced and impacted a whole nation! His word was so true that he was known as simply **“The man of God”** (1 Samuel 9:6). What a testimony to have. Surely God would have you and me to be known in the same way!

SAMSON: On the negative side we read of the plight of Samson who experienced a miraculous birth (his parents were barren), and an outpouring of the Holy Spirit and power in his life that enabled him to do mighty things. The strength he moved in staggered the people of his day. **And yet he lost it all because he failed to develop a personal sensitivity to God’s voice!** Samson’s weakness was associating with wrong women, and subsequently wrong sexual relationships. This stopped him from discerning correctly. In fact his sensitivity to the voice of God was so bad that it is written: **And she (Delilah) said, “The Philistines be upon you, Samson!” So he awoke from his sleep, and said, “I will go out as before, as at other times, and shake myself free!” But he did not know that the Lord had departed from him** (Judges 16:20).

What a sad statement!

- **He did not know that the Lord had departed from him!**

A man of God is brought down and publicly humiliated because of taking God’s presence “for granted.” He was living on past experience, deceiving himself to believing that because he got away with it in the past that he would continue to get away with it in the future. He was functioning “mechanically” (by habit) rather than taking the time to develop his own personal relationship with the Lord. He was (in a way) deceived by his own power gift!

When any Christian ~ in ministry or otherwise ~ comes to that place of not knowing whether God is with them or not, it is a sure sign that there is a real insensitivity to the voice of God. Samson’s strong will and determination to “do his own thing” caused a tremendous downfall in his life. His discernment had

gotten so bad that he did not know when God had left him! His power and ability deceived him! All the past miracles of God in his life did not count for much once he had “lost contact” with the presence of God . . . once ignorance took over and he lived by **presumption rather than by relationship**.

- **His life turned to worms in a big way!**

Samson’s life example is also a strong message to all of us of the importance of forming right relationships. Samson kept mixing in the wrong company and, as a result was influenced by the wrong voices. He allowed Delilah to so influence him that it is written: **“And it came to pass, when she pestered him daily with her words and pressed him, so that his soul was vexed to death, that he told her all his heart . . .”** (Judges 16:16).

- **Delilah wore him down with her words. This is surely one of the tactics against Christians ~ the devil wants to wear us down, and he uses other people to do it!**

BALAAM is another example of someone who had risen to become a nationally known prophet of God, speaking out some profound utterances (Numbers 22-24). Yet he never dealt with some major issues in his own heart. He was covetous, greedy and unrighteous. 2 Peter Chapter 2 has some very revealing stuff on those who start well, but get led astray along the way. They are likened to Balaam: **“These have forsaken** (“katale” or “kateipo” = “to leave behind; to forsake, abandon” – Bullinger’s) **the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness** (“adikia” = “that which ought not to be because of revealed truth; wrong” – Bullinger’s); **but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man’s voice restrained the madness** (“paraphonia” = “insanity, i.e. foolhardiness; madness” – Strong’s; “the state of being aside from a right mind, folly” – Bullinger’s) **of the prophet”** (2 Peter 2:15-17).

But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: “A dog returns to his own vomit,” and “a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire” (2 Peter 2:22).

- **We must guard against the Balaam’s of this world!**

The Epistle of Jude also mentions Balaam: **“Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily** (“ekcheo” or “ekchuno” = “spoken of a passion, to rush into, give one’s self up to” – Bullinger’s) **in the error** (“plane” = “fraudulence; deceit, to deceive, delusion, error” – Strong’s; “a wandering, seduction from the truth” – Bullinger’s) **of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah”** (v. 11).

It is interesting to note that the reason given for Jude's Epistle was to warn us of listening to the wrong people (the wrong voice): ***"Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common*** ("koinos" = "pertaining equally to all" – Bullinger's) ***salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend*** ("1. to struggle in rivalry, battle, etc.; vie. 2. to argue earnestly; debate. 3. to assert or maintain" – Collins) ***earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ . . ."*** (v. 3-4 but read whole chapter).

The word "earnest(ly)" is a challenging one, for it means to "1. be serious in mind or intention. 2. showing or characterized by sincerity of intention. 3. demanding or receiving serious attention" (Collins). When it comes to our holding on to the truth of the Christian Gospel, we are told we have to ***"contend earnestly"*** for it. If we don't, then we are going to be subject to the temptations of listening to the wrong voices with their wrong doctrines, and we then finish up heading off in the wrong direction, believing the wrong things. Our loyalty and faith to Jesus Christ can become eroded and we finish up as worms!

The Living Bible states these verses as follows: ***"Dearly loved friends, I had been planning to write you some thoughts about the salvation God has given us, but now I find I must write of something else instead, urging you to stoutly defend the truth which God gave, once for all, to His people to keep without change through the years. I say this because some godless teachers have wormed their way in among you, saying that after we become Christians we can do just as we like without fear of God's punishment. The fate of such people was written long ago, for they have turned against our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ"*** (Jude 3-4).

Another version puts it like this: ***"Beloved, my whole concern was to write to you in regard to our common salvation. [But] I found it necessary and was impelled to write you and urgently appeal to you and exhort [you] to contend for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints – the faith [which is that sum of Christian belief] which was delivered verbally to the holy people of God. For certain men have crept in stealthily – gaining entrance secretly by a side [door]. Their doom was predicted long ago, (impious, profane) ungodly persons who pervert the grace (the spiritual blessing and favour) of our God into lawlessness and wantonness and immorality, and disown and deny our sole Master and Lord, Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One"*** (Jude 3-4, AMP.).

There is an urgency (in Jude's words), of the absolute necessity to hold on to the truth of the Christian Message as it was originally delivered to us. Even in his day, Jude saw that the downward pathway of "truth decay" was already taking place, with men corrupting the truth of Jesus and turning it into something else.

Following such people will cause the manna from heaven (the revelation of God) in our life to turn to worms, and we will seriously lose out on the blessings and fruitfulness of God in our lives. How important it is to discern the voices that we hear, for those that influence us will have an effect in our lives, either for good or bad.

Over the years of The Gospel Faith Messenger Ministry (GFM), there have been several men of God who have tried to get us to close this ministry down. They all thought they were saying the right thing, but we knew that God had raised this ministry up to be a blessing to others. From its very small beginnings it has slowly grown to now influence numbers of people in over 90 nations. Each time that someone would try and convince us that “this ministry is just your own idea,” when we took it to the Lord in response to the criticism, He always said and did something that caused us to know that He wanted it to continue. He also enabled us to rise up and break through onto the next level; the end result being that we have been able to impact even more people than before. But if we had not **“earnestly contended”** for that which we knew was God, it would have been a different story today. We could have easily finished up “a bucket of worms,” with nothing to show for the many years we have invested our lives into. Yet, despite having to over-ride people’s opinions in favour of God’s will, that does not mean that we ignore the voices of those Christians who are over us (by virtue of their position of authority) in the Lord. As much as we can we should be able to submit these words ~ prophetic and otherwise ~ to spiritual men and women who care for us, and who should desire the best for us. This applies especially when it involves a major decision to move location, or stepping out in Christian ministry. At those times we should submit the prophetic words to other trustworthy spiritual men and women of God ~ men and women who should know something of our giftings, character and calling in God. That is what church is for ~ our safety and spiritual development, as well as a place of fellowship and belonging. One reason why we are strong on having prophetic words taped or written down is so that those receiving the prophetic words can listen to them again privately, and they can also allow others to listen to them to discern their content and accuracy. True prophetic words will stand the test!

- **It is very important to know the voice of God in Christian ministry!**

Why do I say this? Because there are times when the negative voice comes from those we look up to and respect. And when that happens, we go through a time of turmoil because we have been taught to submit to those over us. **But what if their advice is wrong? Who do we believe: men ~ or God?** You have to be strong to stand for God in those times, for it will cause you to be somewhat criticized and ostracized as being a “rebel.” The fact is that if we do not personally know the voice of God for ourselves, then we will be influenced and guided by people ~ the voice of man. And, according to the experience of the Bible characters, few people truly know and understand the will of God for someone else. That is why knowing the prophetic foundation of your life and

calling is so important. Without knowing that, it is so easy to be swayed by the voices of good Christian people. **And sometimes those good Christian voices can take you right out of the will of God for your life.**

I would make mention also of another reason why it is so important that we are able to discern the voice of God, especially when it is coming through other Christians. There can be experiences where the same person can be right in one situation and wrong in another. Just because someone got it right last time does not necessarily mean they will get it right next time as well. It is commonly known that often those same people who were at the forefront of a previous revival are the very opponents of a new move of the Holy Spirit. Why? Because it is not happening the way they think it should. They have become entrenched in a narrow perspective and vision. Be encouraged to keep developing your discerning ability and skills. And, most of all, **learn to trust your discernment enough to act upon it!**

How can we develop sensitivity to God's voice? It is by responding to that which (we believe) is God speaking to us.

- **How will we know that it is God unless we are prepared to respond to what He says in a practical way?**

With regards to hearing God's voice, if we are not willing to "step out" on what we hear, then we will never know whether it is God, or our own thoughts. It is by trial and error, then re-adjusting and trying again, that we learn obedience. If we keep at it, we will come to a place where we can recognize the voice of God in whatever way it comes to us. To be sensitive to the voice of God means that we value His voice more than any other, and that we want to hear His voice clearly enough for us to respond to it in love. Jesus said, **"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me"** (John 10:27). He also said, **"The sheep follow Him, for they know His voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers"** (John 10:4-5). When we know the Master's voice, we have no desire to follow a strange voice. If Samson had truly cultivated the voice of God in his life, he would have spared himself from the agony of what he went through because of his ignorance and insensitivity to God. Let us learn the lesson now!

- **Be encouraged to cultivate a sensitivity to God's voice.**

When we are developing sensitivity to the voice of God, we are demonstrating that we place a high value on that voice, and that we want to hear it right. If we cannot discern the source of the voices that come to us, and learn to know what to do with those voices, then we are going to experience more "worms" (than we ought to) interfering with the purposes of God for our lives. This becomes especially important when it comes to exercising the Spiritual Gifts, for each one of them functions as a direct result of our accepting that God the Holy Spirit is

saying something to us ~ and that He wants us to say or do something for others ~ as a direct result of what He is saying at that particular point in time.

- **God wants us to have good fruit in our lives through the operation of Spiritual Gifts ~ good fruit don't have wormholes in them!**

In our next chapter we shall look at the importance of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit ~ and how we deliver those gifts ~ having the necessity to be presented with the character of the Fruit of the Holy Spirit. The Fruit determines how we use our voice, the emphasis of our voice, the loudness or softness of our voice (and actions), etc. The developing of the Fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives will bring about a greater sensitivity in the delivery of Spiritual Gifts, thus enabling us to have a far greater blessing and impact in the lives of the receivers of those Gifts.

Chapter Five

THE GIFTS AND FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT WORKING TOGETHER

Over the years there has often been controversy about the Gifts of the Holy Spirit and the Fruit of the Holy Spirit with regards their importance and emphasis. Many believe the Fruit is much more necessary, while others emphasize the importance of the Gifts. It is not a matter of Fruit versus Gifts at all. Both are God-ordained for the Christian to be developing (in their lives and walk with God). It is not “either or,” but “both and.” By that I mean that **both the Fruit and Gifts of the Holy Spirit are to have a very special place of importance in our lives. They are an integral part of the Holy Spirit, Who lives inside the Spirit-filled believer. They are within us to be cultivated and activated.** The outworking of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit from our own lives is very important for us, for each Gift represents an aspect of the voice of God. For example, we do not step out and prophesy until after we have a sense or conviction that God is speaking to us to say/prophesy something publicly. We do not give a word of knowledge to others until after we receive that word. The “receiving of that word” is the voice of God to us. So the more we flow in the exercising of Spiritual Gifts, the more we are going to understand the voice of God and how it comes to us. The exercising of Spiritual Gifts has helped me tremendously to recognize the voice of God and how it comes to me.

- **The exercising happens as a result of the recognizing.**

In this chapter I am placing before you **the importance of the Gifts and the Fruit of the Holy Spirit working together.** It is one thing to have revelation from the Holy Spirit for someone else (Gifts) ~ it is entirely another thing to be able to

administer or deliver that revelation according to the Fruit of the Holy Spirit. When we can know the two working together we shall see and experience a much greater impact of the Kingdom of God in our midst than ever before.

Gifts can be instant. Developing Fruit takes time. Prophetic Ministry and the exercising of the Spiritual Gifts (1 Corinthians 12:7-11) should be a growing and maturing ministry that sees us becoming more effective and accurate as we allow the Fruit of the Spirit to come forth within us.

- **Often the Prophetic Ministry is spoiled and discredited by the mannerism of the delivery, rather than the accuracy of what is being said or done.**

Hence the need is for us to understand more of what the Fruit of the Spirit really means.

For the Gifts to be developed in us in a God-glorifying way we need to also demonstrate a consistency in displaying the Fruit, i.e. love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faith/faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-26).

- **It is easy to love . . . some times.**
- **It is easy to be joyful . . . some times.**

But (let us ask ourselves), what about our ability to demonstrate an ongoing consistency in these Fruits ~ **all the time?** It is obvious that life is not simply love, joy and peace; for other Fruit speak strongly of the need for endurance (when things are going against us); for self-control (when we feel like giving in to temptations, etc.); for faithfulness (when it seems others are not remaining faithful), etc.

The Gifts display the revelation and power of God available to bless and edify others. The Fruit will bring the cross of Jesus Christ to bear in our lives, for it will cause us to discipline and deny ourselves, as well as guard ourselves against those who would want to manipulate us to live differently. Those who live “carelessly” do not like to be in the presence of a disciplined follower of Jesus for long!

To help us to be refreshed in the Gifts and Fruit of the Holy Spirit, the following section is a breakdown of their meanings:

THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Definition: “The Gifts . . . of the Holy Spirit are the transrational (“beyond the mind and understanding”) manifestations of God. They are given by God for the

purpose of ministry taking place for the good of the Body of Christ” (the late John Wimber, “Vineyard,” USA).

“But to each one is given the manifestation of the (Holy) Spirit – that is, the evidence, the spiritual illumination of the Spirit — for good and profit. To one is given in and through the (Holy) Spirit [the power to speak] a message of wisdom, and to another [the power to express] a word of knowledge and understanding according to the same (Holy) Spirit; To another (wonder-working) faith by the same (Holy) Spirit, to another the extraordinary powers of healing by the one Spirit; To another the working of miracles, to another prophetic insight —that is, the gift of interpreting the divine will and purpose; to another the ability to discern and distinguish between [the utterances of true] spirits [and false ones], to another various kinds of [unknown] tongues, to another the ability to interpret [such] tongues. All these [achievements and abilities] are inspired and brought to pass by one and the same (Holy) Spirit, Who apportions to each person individually [exactly] as He chooses” (1 Corinthians 12:7-11, AMP.).

THE WORD OF WISDOM (1 Corinthians 12:8):

Definition: “The supernatural application of knowledge” (Rev. Dennis Bennett, USA).

The meaning of “wisdom” is “skill, cleverness, the right application of knowledge.” The Word of Wisdom gives us the skill in knowing how and when to minister accurately by the Holy Spirit into peoples’ lives. It makes the timing right and enables the other Gifts to make a significant impact.

THE WORD OF KNOWLEDGE (1 Corinthians 12:8):

Definition: “The revelation of facts past, present or future which were not learned through the efforts of the natural mind” (Rev. Dennis Bennett, USA). Words of Knowledge are “God-given disclosures” (Michael Green, England).

“Knowledge” is from the Greek “gnosis” ~ “knowing, or recognition, the knowledge or understanding of a thing, the insight which manifests itself in the thorough understanding of the subjects with which it meets and in the conduct determined thereby” (Bullinger’s).

A GIFT OF FAITH (1 Corinthians 12:9):

Definition: “The mysterious surge of confidence which sometimes arises within a person faced with a specific situation or need” (the late John Wimber, USA).

This can apply personally, or for others, or for Christian projects, i.e. finance for church building. “Faith” here is translated from the Greek word “pistis” meaning: “faith, faithfulness, steadfastness” (Young’s); “firm persuasion, the conviction which is based upon hearing, not upon sight or knowledge; a firmly relying confidence in what we hear from God in His Word” (Bullinger’s).

THE GIFTS OF HEALING(S) (1 Corinthians 12:9):

Definition: “To supernaturally bring cure for the sick, physical, spiritual and emotional; to make whole in the fullest sense of the word; saving from disease and its effects” (Rodney Francis, New Zealand).

Notice this Gift is in the plural: “gifts.” “Healing(s)” in 1 Corinthians 12:9 is translated from “iama” meaning: “healing” (Young’s); “a cure, healing” (Strong’s); “healing (the termination denoting the complete act; the result or product of the act)” (Bullinger’s).

THE GIFT OF THE WORKING OF MIRACLES (1 Corinthians 12:10):

Definition: “A remarkable or surprising event that happens by the direct intervention of God, not following the general known laws of nature” (Dr. David Yonggi Cho, South Korea).

The word “working” is, of course, an action word and is translated from the Greek word “energema” meaning: “an energy, inworking” (Young’s); “to be in work, to be effective, active, operative, to energize or be energized” (Bullinger’s).

The word “miracles” is translated from the well-known word “dunamis” meaning: “act of power” (Young’s); “special miraculous power (usually by implication a miracle itself)” (Strong’s); “capability, power to do anything; then, power, might in action . . . a miracle as wrought by divine power; a work, with reference to the power required for its performance” (Bullinger’s). (See my booklet, “**The ‘Dunamis’ Power Of God**”).

THE GIFT OF PROPHECY (1 Corinthians 12:10):

Definition: “The Gift of Prophecy is the special ability that God gives to members of the Body of Christ to receive and communicate an immediate message of God to His gathered people, a group among them, or any one of His people individually, through a divinely anointed utterance” (Peter Wagner, USA).

The Greek word for prophecy, “propheteia,” implies that one is speaking for another; speaking on behalf of God. We are exhorted to specifically desire to prophesy (1 Corinthians 14:1, 31). Prophecy touches the Church at its point of need. It is based on revelation . . . the revelation of God’s love, care and desire for His people to be built up. It is not to be used to criticize or “bash” the Church.

THE GIFT OF DISCERNING OF SPIRITS (1 Corinthians 12:10):

Definition: “The Gift that gives the Christian insight into the supernatural world. The Gift is to enable the person to know the motivation behind a situation or person” (Rev. Alistair Taylor, England).

The word “discerning” is from the Greek word “diakrisis” meaning: “a thorough judging” (Young’s); “a distinguishing, discerning clearly, discriminating” (Bullinger’s);

“recognizing or perceiving clearly (the differences)” (Collins). This Gift discerns both good and bad spirits.

MANY KINDS OF TONGUES (1 Corinthians 12:10):

Definition: “The Gift of Tongues is the supernatural ability to speak to others and/or to God in a language or utterance never learned by the speaker” (Dr. Bill Bright, Campus Crusade for Christ, USA).

There are two approaches: One, that The Gift of Tongues, when coupled with The Gift of Interpretation of Tongues, is equal to The Gift of Prophecy. The second approach suggests that Tongues is expressing praise to God, and therefore any interpretation is also in terms of prayer, praise or thanksgiving to God Himself. The emphasis is that true Tongues and Interpretation of Tongues are directed toward God, rather than directed from God to the Church. **“The man who speaks in a ‘tongue’ addresses not men (for no one understands a word he says) but God: and only in his spirit is he speaking spiritual secrets”** (1 Corinthians 14:2, J.B. Phillips).

THE GIFT OF INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES (1 Corinthians 12:10):

Definition: “The Gift by which God made intelligible what was hidden from all” (Leon Morris).

The word “interpretation” here is from the Greek “harmeneia” meaning “explanation” or “full interpretation” (Bullinger’s). It is the ability through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to bring understandable meaning to an inspired public message in tongues. If one accepts that The Gift of Tongues is directed toward God in the form of prayer, or praise, or thanksgiving, or exaltation of the Name and Majesty of God, then The Gift of Interpretation of Tongues will be of the same character. Dr. Michael Harper (United Kingdom) said: “We should expect the interpretation to be mainly an expression of prayer or worship and, therefore, different from a prophecy.” It is a Spirit-inspired declaration of praise, exaltation and honouring of God Himself. We are also discovering that there are various ways by which Interpretation of Tongues can be administered.

As I have pursued the Gifts and Fruit of the Holy Spirit in my life, I have come to recognize that the nine Gifts of the Spirit are actually nine variations of the voice of God. By that I mean these Gifts do not operate through us until after we have discerned that the Holy Spirit is prompting us to say or do something.

- **Spiritual Gifts help us to perceive the voice of God more clearly, for in exercising them we have to be very sensitive to that which God is desiring of us, as well as who the message is for, and how and when we are to deliver such.**

All this demands that we listen closely to God. Otherwise we can be guilty of delivering the right message to the right person (or people) at the wrong place

and the wrong time. When that happens the impact is greatly lessened, and can even be spoiled to the point that there is no active response.

- **When we are sensitive enough to hear clearly the voice of the Lord, and then with a love commitment to do exactly what He has said, we will see lives impacted in a tremendous way, because this releases the “God-factor” into the situation.**

Hence, the absolute need for the Fruit of the Holy Spirit to be actively working along with the Gifts of the Holy Spirit within our lives.

THE FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Let us now take a closer look at the meanings of the Fruit of the Holy Spirit:

LOVE (Galatians 5:22):

Definition: The Greek word is “agape” meaning: “affection or benevolence; a love feast:- (feast of) charity, dear, love” (Strong’s).

The word “benevolence” is “1. inclination or tendency to help or do good to others; charity. 2. an act of kindness” (Collins). “Benevolent” is “1. intending or showing good will; kindly; friendly. 2. doing good or giving aid to others, rather than making profit; charitable” (Collins).

“Love is a word not found in the profane writers . . . it is unknown to writers outside of the New Testament. Philanthropy was the highest word used by the Greeks, which is a very different thing. ‘Agape’ denotes the love which springs from admiration and veneration, and which chooses its object with decision of will, and devotes a self-denying and compassionate devotion to it. Love in its fullest conceivable form” (Bullinger’s).

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35).

It is not by our doctrines or theology (that make us into disciples of Jesus), but **our genuine love one for the other!** How interesting that when it comes to the real issues of following Jesus, we generally seem to struggle to do what He says.

JOY (Galatians 5:22):

Definition: Greek is “chara” meaning: “cheerfulness, i.e. calm delight: gladness; exceedingly joyful” (Strong’s).

“Delight, joy, gladness” (Bullinger’s).

“The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 13:52).

“. . . For the joy of the Lord is your strength” (Nehemiah 8:10).

These Scriptures are self-explanatory. The Holy Spirit-filled life is a joyful one ~ even in the midst of persecution, trials and testing! (Matthew 5:11-12).

PEACE (Galatians 5:22):

Definition: Greek is “eirene” (from a primary verb “eiro”) meaning: “(to join); peace (literally or figuratively); by implication prosperity:- one, peace, quietness, rest, set at one again” (Strong’s).

“Peace, rest; in contrast with strife, and denoting the absence or end of strife . . . a state of health or well-being, it denotes a state of untroubled, undisturbed well-being. The Peace which is the result of forgiveness enjoyed must not be confounded with the Peace Christ has ‘made’ by the blood of His cross.” “The Peace of God in Philippians 4:7, is the Peace which God has, as being free from all anxiety and care, and arising from His perfectly knowing the future. In proportion, therefore, as we ‘make our requests’ unto Him, a measure of the peace which He has will ‘keep’ us from being ‘careful’ (full of care). See Isaiah 26:3-4 . . . **“You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You. Trust in the Lord forever, for in YAH, the Lord, is everlasting strength”** (Bullinger’s).

LONGSUFFERING (Galatians 5:22):

Definition: Greek is “makrothumia” meaning: “forbearance or fortitude – longsuffering, patience” (Strong’s).

“Forbearance” is “1. The act of forbearing. 2. self control; patience. 3. abstention from or postponement of the enforcement of a legal right, especially by a creditor allowing his debtor time to pay” (Collins).

“Long before being angry, patient endurance, forbearance.” Hebrews 6:12 . . . **“That you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”** James 5:10-11 . . . **“My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord ~ that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful”** (Bullinger’s).

GENTLENESS or KINDNESS (Galatians 5:22):

Definition: Greek word is “chrestotes” meaning: “usefulness, i.e. moral excellence (in character or demeanor): gentleness, goodness, kindness” (Strong’s).

“Demeanor” is “the way a person behaves towards others; conduct” (Collins).

“Benevolence, benignity; that sweetness of disposition, active beneficence in spite of ingratitude” (Bullinger’s).

“Benign” is “1. showing kindness; genial; favourable; not threatening to life or health; not malignant” (Collins). “Benignity” is “1. the quality of being benign; favourable attitude. 2. a kind or gracious act” (Collins).

GOODNESS (Galatians 5:22):

Definition: Greek is “agathosune” meaning: “goodness, i.e. virtue or beneficence: goodness” (Strong’s).

“Virtue” is “1. the quality or practice of moral excellence or righteousness. 2. a particular moral excellence: the virtue of tolerance. 3. any of the cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance) or theological virtues (faith, hope, and charity). 4. any admirable quality, feature, or trait. 5. an effective, active, or inherent power or force. 6. chastity (Collins).

“Goodness and kindness, the quality of him who is ruled by and aims at the good, moral worth, and sterling goodness apart from attractiveness” (Bullinger’s).

FAITH / FAITHFULNESS (Galatians 5:22):

Definition: Greek is “pistis” meaning: “persuasion, i.e. credence; moral conviction (of religious truth, or the truthfulness of God or a religious teacher), especially reliance upon Christ for salvation . . . assurance, belief, believe, faith, fidelity” (Strong’s).

“Fidelity” is “1. the devotion to duties, obligations, etc. faithfulness. 2. loyalty or devotion, as to a person or cause. 3. faithfulness to one’s spouse. 4. adherence to truth; accuracy in reporting detail . . .” (Collins).

“Faith, i.e. firm persuasion, the conviction which is based upon hearing, not upon sight, or knowledge; a firmly relying confidence in what we hear from God in His Word” (Bullinger’s).

MEEKNESS or GENTLENESS (Galatians 5:23):

Definition: Greek is “praotes” meaning: “gentleness; by implication humility:-meekness” (Strong’s).

“Meekness, mildness, or gentle, enduring all things with an even temper, tender, free from haughty self-sufficiency, tender of spirit, the exhibition of that tenderness in bearing with others” (Bullinger’s).

TEMPERANCE or SELF-CONTROL (Galatians 5:23):

Definition: Greek is “egkrateia” meaning: “self-control (especially continence): temperance” (Strong’s).

“Continence” is “exercising self-restraint, especially from sexual activity; chaste” (Collins).

“Mastery or dominion over; self-command, self-control (opposite to self-indulgence) the grace by which the flesh is controlled” (Bullinger’s).

It is good that we take a little time and allow the meanings of these words to sink in. Far too often we can skim over words ~ not realizing their meaning and significance ~ and so lose the power and impact of them in our lives, and those we minister to.

- **It is significant to note that the Fruit of the Spirit always demonstrate a consistency in what they are.**

They do not waver; they are not “up and down” in the developing of their Fruit. Jesus said, **“It is by our fruits that we are known”** (Matthew 7:15-20). The context is in the discerning of true and false prophets!

- **The Prophetic Ministry must pass the Fruit test!**

To apply the Gifts and the Fruit of the Holy Spirit together in ministry means that we do have to cultivate a skilfulness (wisdom) and understanding in how to minister to each individual, according to the revelation or Gift that is given at that particular time. To have a revelation of God for a person and then to deliver it “like pointing a shotgun and pulling the trigger” is going to cause more harm than good to the person(s) concerned. The revelation will be lost because they have been blinded by the insensitive method of delivery. That, then, can easily finish up becoming “worms.” Allowing the Fruit of the Spirit to come forth within us in an ongoing and consistent way will cause the Gifts to become much more accepted and respected, and the doors will open for you to minister them to others.

My prayer is that this message will be helpful to you, and encourage you to further recognize the need for the Gifts and Fruit of the Holy Spirit to be working together in and through your life. That way you will be glorifying God more with the Gifts He has given you.

Chapter Six

WISDOM, UNDERSTANDING and KNOWLEDGE

~ THREE KEY WORDS THAT GO TOGETHER

In seeking to discern and know the voice of God in our lives, it is good for us to understand some of the key words that help us to recognize what God is saying to us. Throughout the Scriptures we find that there are three key words that are often linked together ~ those words are **wisdom, understanding and knowledge**. They are necessary words for us to understand if we are going to faithfully serve the Lord here on earth. Walking in the light of these three words will help us tremendously to discern the right from wrong voices, and to prevent us from producing “worms.” Worms are maggots! Maggots turn into flies!

- **Life is far too short here on earth for us to be producing worms!**

The following is written to help us understand more clearly these words and what they can do for us when they are operating in our lives. Please note that there is a natural wisdom, understanding and knowledge, and there is a spiritual wisdom, understanding and knowledge. This message is focusing on the spiritual application of the words, for it is the spiritual aspect of these words that will make all the difference in our lives, both in decision making and in our developing of an effective prophetic ministry. God wants to fill us with more of His wisdom, understanding and knowledge.

BEZALEL (see Exodus 31:1-11; Exodus 35:30-35; Exodus 36:1-2). God spoke these words concerning Bezalel: ***“And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom*** (Hebrew word is “chokmah”), ***in understanding*** (“tebunah”), ***in knowledge*** (“daath”), ***and in all manner of workmanship . . .***”

The word **“wisdom”** is translated from the Hebrew word “chokmah,” meaning “wisdom, skill” (Young’s); “wisdom (in a good sense):- skilful, wisdom, wisely, wit” (Strong’s); “to be or become wise. The word denotes the acquisition of the habit of wisdom . . . by experience . . . the receiving of instruction, and the exercising of correct judgment; wise-hearted” (Wilson’s).

“Wisdom” is also given as meaning “to discern, to perceive; to discern mentally, to understand; to have understanding, to be intelligent, wise; discreet” (Wilson’s). “1. the ability or result of an ability to think and act utilizing knowledge, experience, understanding, common sense, and insight. 2. accumulated knowledge, erudition, or enlightenment . . . 4. soundness of mind” (Collins). (“erudition” is “showing extensive scholarship learning” – Collins).

The word **“understanding”** is translated from “tebunah,” meaning “to separate, to distinguish; hence, to discern, to mark, to understand, all which depend on the power of separating, distinguishing, discriminating; specially, to discern, perceive; to discern mentally, to understand; insight, understanding” (Wilson’s); “discretion, reason, skilfulness, understanding, wisdom” (Strong’s).

The word **“knowledge”** is translated from “daath,” meaning “cunning knowledge” (Strong’s); “to perceive, to be sensible of, by sight, by touch, but chiefly in the

mind; hence, to understand, observe; to consider; to mark and observe with a purpose . . .” (Wilson’s).

- **With each of these three words there is a “cross-over” of meanings; they tend to blend into one another. They all have to do with perceiving and discerning in order to act wisely, with understanding and in genuine knowledge that glorifies God. It is about learning to know what to do with what we perceive and know through wisdom, understanding and knowledge.**

Just as God gave wisdom, understanding and knowledge to Bezalel to enable him to be more skilful in working with his hands, so He can do the same for us.

- **We can become more skilful in practical, as well as spiritual abilities. The evidence of “the God-factor” will be seen in the finished product ~ the results.**

In Deuteronomy 4:1-6 the Israelites were instructed to ***“listen to the statutes*** (“choq” = “something decreed, prescribed; a statute, ordinance, law” – Wilson’s) and the judgments (“mishpat” = “a sentence or formal decree, divine law, charge” – Strong’s) ***of the Lord,*** because they were the keys or secrets to their gaining wisdom, understanding and knowledge: ***“Now, O Israel, listen*** (“shamea” or “shama” = “to hear intelligently, often with the implication of attention, obedience, etc.; consider, discern, give ear, perceive, understand” – Strong’s) ***to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers is giving you. You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you. Your eyes have seen what the Lord did at Baal Peor; for the Lord your God has destroyed from among you all the men who followed Baal of Peor. But you who held fast to the Lord your God are alive today, every one of you. Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments just as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess. Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’”*** Those statutes and judgments were to be observed or kept (“shamar” = “to keep, to watch, to guard; to keep safe, to protect, to preserve; to retain, to reserve; to observe; to regard; keep diligently” – Wilson’s).

With God’s covenant principles He makes Himself very clear. The wisdom, understanding and knowledge of God will enable us to live a life that is pleasing to God, and that releases His blessings in us for all to see. If we do not fully follow His commands, then we will not enjoy the benefits of His covenant principles.

- It is our obedience to God that demonstrates to Him (and others) that we place His Word and voice above every other word and voice in the world today.

JOSHUA. In Deuteronomy 34:9 we read of Joshua receiving an impartation of wisdom when Moses laid his hands on him: ***“Now Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom (“chokmah”), for Moses had laid his hands on him; so the children of Israel heeded him, and did as the Lord had commanded Moses.”*** This teaches us that some wisdom for leadership responsibilities can be imparted. The people recognized the significance of what Moses did, for they then transferred their allegiance to Joshua’s leadership as a result of that impartation of wisdom from the hands of Moses! That impartation of wisdom gave the people the knowledge and understanding that Joshua was God’s chosen leader to carry on from Moses.

SOLOMON. Solomon prayed for wisdom and knowledge (1 Kings 3:5-15; 2 Chronicles 1:7-12). God was pleased with his request and granted it. Immediately Solomon became known for the wisdom he spoke concerning two women and a dead baby. The people saw the wisdom (“chokmah”) of God was in him to administer justice (1 Kings 3:16-28).

In 1 Kings 4:29-34 we read where ***“God gave Solomon wisdom (“chokmah”) and exceedingly great understanding, and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore. Thus Solomon’s wisdom excelled (“rab” = “abounded, multiplied in quantity” – Strong’s) the wisdom of all the men of the East, and all the wisdom of Egypt . . . And men of all nations, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom, came to hear the wisdom of Solomon.”***

“So the Lord gave Solomon wisdom, as He had promised him . . .” (1 Kings 5:12). What amazing wisdom God gave to Solomon! The fact that God gave Solomon tremendous wisdom that far exceeded any others of his day did not mean that it was an “automatic” supply for him from thereon until the end of his life. For if we read on, we do see that Solomon in later life made some very unwise decisions that were to cost him dearly. He allowed himself to become entangled with ~ and then he married ~ some wrong women who turned his heart and principles away from that which God had given him (1 Kings 11). He was a little somewhat like Samson that we read about earlier.

- How could such a thing happen?

How can it be that the wisest man of his time ~ and made wise by God Himself ~ can lose the benefits of all that wisdom and “mess up” because that is what Solomon did (1 Kings 4:29-34)? The answer is that Solomon listened to the wrong voice ~ first the voices without, and then the voice within ~ and made some “dumb” decisions. Let the Scriptures speak:

But King Solomon loved many foreign (“nokri” = “a strange woman, opposite to a wife, spoken usually in respect to illicit intercourse, and hence, an adulteress, harlot; of another’s house” – Wilson’s) ***women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites – from the nations of whom the Lord had said to the children of Israel, “You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods.” Solomon clung*** (“dabaq” = “to impinge, i.e. cling or adhere; abide fast, cleave fast together, follow close or hard after, be joined together” – Strong’s) ***to these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines*** (“1. a secondary wife, usually of lower social rank. 2. a woman who cohabits with a man, to lie together” – Collins); ***and his wives turned away his heart. For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal*** (“shalem” = “to be complete, perfect, entire: it applies to quantity; to the mind and heart; to the outward state and circumstances; to the doing anything in a full and complete manner” – Wilson’s) ***to the Lord his God, as was the heart of his father David . . . Solomon did evil*** (“ra” = “bad”) ***in the sight of the Lord, and did not fully follow the Lord, as did his father David. Then Solomon built an high place for Chemosh the abomination*** (“shiqquts” = “disgusting, filthy” – Strong’s; “to detest; to be abominable, unclean, chiefly used of idolatry, and of things that one may not touch, eat, or worship” – Wilson’s) ***of Moab . . . and for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon. And he did likewise for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods. So the Lord became angry*** (“anaph” = “enraged” – Strong’s) ***with Solomon, because his heart had turned from the Lord God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, and had commanded*** (“tsavah” = “”charged”) ***him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not keep what the Lord had commanded. Therefore the Lord said to Solomon, “Because you have done this, and have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant . . .”*** (1 Kings 11:1-13).

This is a very sobering message for us to always keep our heart and motives pure before God. If our heart and motives are not pure and right, then (over time) we are going to start to entertain wrong thoughts which, in turn, will open us up to listening to the wrong voices. Those voices will then cause us to listen to the wrong advice, which will take us away from the commands and covenant of the Lord. If it could happen to the wisest man on the earth in his day ~ and it did ~ let us not then think that this principle and process could not happen to us! The human side of us desperately needs the righteousness of Christ, and that only abides as we listen to, and obey His wonderful voice.

The message of Solomon shows us the power of wrong associations, and how they can undermine our faith to the point of taking us away from a right relationship with God, even into disaster. When Solomon got involved with all

those women, he also took on board their idolatry and abominable practices ~ they stole his heart away from his walk with God! He so changed in his heart that he allowed the building of the high places of their abominable gods, which were used for child sacrifices! The Satanists today worship the same gods that Solomon built the altars for!

- **Beware of wrong associations!**

For one man to desire to marry so many women shows that something went drastically wrong in his heart (imagine what the grocery bills must have been)! He knew the commandment of God, yet he still chose to follow his own heart rather than the voice of God. His life and testimony turned to worms! He reaped what he sowed!

HURAM. In getting back to the positive theme of this chapter of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge, Hiram ***“was filled with wisdom*** (“chokmah”) ***and understanding*** (“tebunah”) ***and skill*** (“daath” = “cunning knowledge”) ***in working with all kinds of bronze work. So he came to King Solomon and did all his work***” (1 Kings 7:13-14). These three key words made Hiram a very gifted person with his natural hands.

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA observed Solomon’s wisdom and what it produced ~ houses, food on the table, the seating of his servants, the service of his waiters and their apparel, his cupbearers, Solomon’s entryway, the happiness of the people. ***And when the queen of Sheba had seen all the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built, the food on his table, the seating of his servants, the service of his waiters and their apparel, his cupbearers, and his entryway by which he went up to the house of the Lord, there was no more spirit in her. Then she said to the king: “It was a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom. However I did not believe the words until I came and saw with my own eyes; and indeed the half was not told me. Your wisdom and prosperity exceed the fame of which I heard. Happy are your men and happy are these your servants, who stand continually before you and hear your wisdom! Blessed be the Lord your God, who delighted in you, setting you on the throne of Israel! . . .”*** (1 Kings 10:4-9; 2 Chronicles 9:1-12). She acknowledged that his wisdom enabled him to do justice and righteousness. His wisdom affected his servants and the way things were set out and done. She was amazed at what she saw and how happy the people were.

The Psalmist declared: ***“The mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom*** (“chokmah”) (Psalm 37:30). ***“So teach us to number our days, that we may apply*** (“bo” = “to cause to come in” – Young’s; “1. to put to practical use; utilize; employ. 2. to be relevant, useful, or appropriate. 5. to devote oneself, or one’s efforts, with diligence. 6. to bring into operation or use” – Collins) ***our hearts unto wisdom***” (Psalm 90:12). ***“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a***

good understanding have all those who do His commandments” (Psalm 111:10; see also Proverbs 9:10; Proverbs 15:33).

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS. The Book of Proverbs has much to say on wisdom, understanding and knowledge. The opening verses of the book reveal to us the message it is conveying: **“The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel: To know wisdom and instruction, to perceive** (‘to understand, to know, be acquainted with, to discern, to see, to find, discover, to observe thoroughly with the mind’) **the words of understanding, to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, judgment, and equity; to give prudence** (‘ormah’ = ‘craftiness, subtility’ – Young’s; ‘discretion, prudence, wisdom’ – Strong’s) **to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion – a wise man will hear and increase learning, and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel, to understand a proverb and an enigma, the words of the wise and their riddles. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction”** (Proverbs 1:1-7). Please try and make some time to work your way through this amazing book. Observe these Chapters and Verses: Proverbs 2:1-11; 3:13-23; 4:1-13; 5:1-2; 7:1-5; 8:1,5, 8-14; 9:8-12; 10:13-14, 23; 14:6-8, 33; 16:16; 17:24; 23:23; and 24:3-6.

The Spirit of Wisdom, Understanding and Knowledge rested on JESUS: “There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord” (Isaiah 11:1-2).

Just as the Spirit of the Lord was in Jesus, so now He lives inside of us. It is the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit to reveal more of the wisdom, understanding and knowledge of God to us. Our responsibility is to receive it and apply it in our daily lives: to demonstrate these attributes to the glory of God.

We are to glory in the fact of understanding and knowing that GOD IS THE LORD! **“Thus says the Lord: Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches; But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands** (‘sakal’ = ‘to look at; to be prudent; to act prudently, to be intelligent’ – Wilson’s) **and knows** (‘yada’ = ‘to understand, observe; to consider; to mark and observe with a purpose; to come to the knowledge of, by seeing, by hearing, and by experience’ – Wilson’s) **Me, That I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,” says the Lord** (Jeremiah 9:23-24).

What a privilege! But what a responsibility also! We must continually be examining our hearts to make sure that we are not getting “puffed up” or “carried away” over the things we learn through our walking with Jesus.

- Let us (with humility) keep our priorities right.

DANIEL AND HIS ASSOCIATES were “*gifted in all wisdom* (“chokmah”), *possessing knowledge and quick to understand . . .*” (Daniel 1:4, 17-20; see also Daniel 5:11-14). God gives “*wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding. He reveals deep and secret things . . .*” (Daniel 2:21-22). These attributes kept Daniel and his friends in a place where God could use them to mightily impact a nation ~ even though they were rejected and cast into a burning fiery furnace. God came through for them and delivered them safely out of it! (Daniel 3).

THE APOSTLE PAUL’S PRAYER FOR THE CHRISTIANS. When we look at the heart and desire of the Apostle Paul, we discover that he continually prayed for his fellow believers to be filled with wisdom, understanding and knowledge. He recognized they were keys in being able to faithfully and fruitfully walk with Jesus day by day. May we take to heart for ourselves his prayer: “*That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom* (“sophia”) *and revelation* (“apokalupsis” = “unveiling, uncovering”) *in the knowledge* (“epignosis” = “full knowledge” – Young’s; “clear and exact knowledge; it expresses a more thorough participation on the part of the knower, with the object of knowledge; a knowledge that has a powerful influence on the knower” – Bullinger’s) *of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power . . .*” (Ephesians 1:15-23).

The Greek word used for wisdom in this verse is “sophia” meaning “cleverness, skill; a right application of knowledge” (Bullinger’s); the ability or result of an ability to think and act utilizing knowledge, experience, understanding, common sense, and insight” (Collins).

The Gift of the Word of Wisdom in 1 Corinthians 12:8 is also translated from “sophia.”

- Wisdom is skilfulness and a right application of knowledge.

“*For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled* (“pleroo” = “literally to cram, accomplish, complete, fill up, fulfil” – Strong’s; “to fill, make full, to be complete” – Bullinger’s) *with the knowledge* (“epignosis”) *of His will in all wisdom* (“sophia”) *and spiritual* (“pneumatikos” = “belonging to the Spirit; determined, influenced and proceeding from the Spirit” – Bullinger’s) *understanding* (“sunesis” = “intelligence, insight into anything, understanding, cleverness as shown in quickness of apprehension; acuteness . . . wisdom of productive thought” – Bullinger’s); *that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every*

good work and increasing (“auxano” = “to increase, grow” – Young’s; “grow up” – Bullinger’s) **in the knowledge** (“epignosis”) **of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy**” (Colossians 1:9-11).

“ . . . that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding (“sunesis”), **to the knowledge of the mystery** (“musterion” = “that which is known only to the initiated” – Young’s) **of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures** (“thesauros” = “anything laid up in store; hence, treasure, wealth” – Bullinger’s) **of wisdom and knowledge** (“gnosis” = “knowing, or recognition, the knowledge or understanding of a thing, the insight which manifests itself in the thorough understanding of the subjects with which it meets and in the conduct determined thereby” – Bullinger’s)” (Colossians 2:2-3).

When we take the time to consider what Paul is praying, we soon discover that God’s heart for us is to equip us with the keys and skills that will enable us to outsmart the enemy, and to build a life that is based upon Heavenly Kingdom principles and abilities rather than any natural earthly qualifications we may have.

- **The power of God is displayed through the wisdom, understanding and knowledge of God!**

But like everything else in the lifestyle of the Kingdom of God, we have to personally apply these principles in our lives. They are not merely “nice” words for us to meditate upon, but have to be taken into our heart in such a way that we will gain the benefits of why these things are given to us.

“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him” (James 1:5). We are to ask in faith!

THERE IS A CLEAR DIFFERENCE BETWEEN NATURAL AND SPIRITUAL WISDOM. It has taken me a long time to realize that both natural and spiritual (heavenly) wisdom produce a harvest. Each produces a very different harvest.

- **Success or ruin is determined by which source of wisdom we operate from.**

Jesus taught us about this in His summary of His teaching on the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew Chapters Five through to Seven). What He taught regarding wisdom is so important that I repeat it here:

“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise (“phronimos” = “understanding, thoughtful, practically wise, sensible, prudent” – Bullinger’s) **man who built his house on the rock: and the**

rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew upon that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish (“moros” = “dull or stupid, i.e. heedless, blockhead, absurd, foolish” – Strong’s) ***man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.” And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes*** (Matthew 7:24-29).

“But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say? Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great” (Luke 6:46-49).

What was it that made the difference between the wise man and the foolish man? Both had heard the same words from the mouth of the same Jesus! Yet one finished up a success, and the other a miserable failure. The difference was that the wise man listened, heard, and put into practice what Jesus taught. The foolish man only listened, but decided to take “short cuts” and do it his own way. He self-destructed further down the pathway of life.

- **The difference between a wise man and a fool is in the putting into practice what Jesus says!**

James in his epistle reveals to us the difference between the natural and spiritual wisdom. Let his words sober us up as we meditate upon what he says: ***“Who is a wise*** (“sophos” = “skill” – Young’s) ***man and endued with knowledge*** (“epistemon” = “understanding, intelligent” – Young’s; “to fix one’s mind upon, i.e. to understand, to know how to do anything, to know well, to have knowledge” – Bullinger’s) ***among you? (KJV) Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom*** (“sophia”). ***But if you have bitter envy*** (“zelos” = “jealousy, malice, emulation, indignation” – Strong’s) ***and self-seeking*** (“eritheia” = “factions, contentions” – Strong’s; “doing it for wages, canvassing, party-spirit” – Bullinger’s) ***in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual*** (“psuchikos” = “soulish, natural, i.e. a stranger to what is of the Spirit” – Bullinger’s), ***demonic*** (“daimoniodes” = “demon-like; the word is specially applied to evil spirits” – Bullinger’s). ***For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.***

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure (“hagnos” = “clean, chaste, pure” – Strong’s; “not contaminated, pure from every defilement” – Bullinger’s), ***then peaceable*** (“eirenikos” = “relating to peace, peaceful, disposed to peace; healthful, wholesome” – Bullinger’s), ***gentle*** (“epieikes” = “appropriate, mild, moderate, patient” – Strong’s), ***willing to yield*** (“easy to be intreated” – KJV; “eupeithes” = “easily persuaded” – Young’s), ***full of mercy*** (“eleos” = “active compassion” – Bullinger’s), ***and good fruits*** (“karpos” = “fruit”), ***without partiality*** (“adiakritos” = “not judging diversely, impartial” – Young’s) ***and without hypocrisy*** (“anupokritos” = “the practice of professing standards, beliefs, etc., contrary to one’s real character or behaviour, especially the pretence of virtue or piety” – Collins)” (James 3:13-18).

Notice in these verses from James 3 that heavenly wisdom has character and graces.

- **Heavenly wisdom is pure, peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.**
- **Earthly wisdom is full of factions and problems!**

What a challenge these three words present to us ~ **wisdom, understanding and knowledge!** May we be found seeking to know and walk in the true meaning of these words, so others will see and know the handiwork of God in our lives! May we be a perceptive and discerning people in these times when many are losing their way in God. Let the truth of God’s Word fill you with faith, courage and revelation as you seek to know the outworking of these words more and more in your life. God bless you.

Chapter Seven

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE GIFT OF PROPHECY OPERATING THROUGH YOU!

One of the nine Gifts of the Holy Spirit is The Gift of Prophecy (1 Corinthians 12:10). This gift can help the Body of Christ to grow in wisdom, understanding and knowledge of God’s will. It seems to me that there is such a lot more to learn about this wonderful gift. In my travels, both nationally and internationally, there is seemingly such a dearth of the operation of the Gift of Prophecy and the other gifts. Christians are either not “catching” the principles of New Testament Christianity, or they are not being taught that it is part of the Spirit-filled life to be functioning in Spiritual Gifts. It is not by accident that Paul opens his teaching on Spiritual Gifts by telling us not to be ignorant of them (1 Corinthians 12:1). Ignorance, I’m afraid to say, is quite rampant in our Christian churches, if the lack

of exercising them is anything to go by. The challenge is for us to recognize that ignorance, and then to do something about eliminating it! Leaders need to clearly teach the importance of Spiritual Gifts functioning within the body of believers, lead by example and doing it themselves, and also openly encouraging their people to do the same. Often the underlying cause of the lack of the operation of Spiritual Gifts is that Leaders do not trust their people enough in hearing from God. And if there is no trust, then there is unlikely to be any encouragement to step out and prophesy in public.

- **If Leaders don't lead, then the people will not follow.**

Another cause of the lack of the Gifts operating is that we are far too self-conscious, rather than being God-conscious and people-conscious. If we are more worried about shyness, whether the word is from God, what others will say, of our making a mistake, etc., then we are never going to break through those negative barriers to become a positive blessing to the people of God. The Gifts of the Holy Spirit are all about edifying the body of Christ. So if the Gifts are not operating, then there is a major part of the body that is not being edified. And if we are not being edified, then discouragement and ignorance will prevail. It is not about "us," but rather about "Him" (Jesus), and His will being fulfilled through our lives. I am very grateful for the operation of Spiritual Gifts; I am today living in the fulfilment of many prophetic words spoken over my life over a number of years. The result is that I have no doubt about what I am doing ministry-wise, as it has all been prophesied by different people in different places ~ people both known and unknown to me at the time of delivery.

Another thing I have learned about Holy Spirit Ministry: If we do not set up an environment for it to happen, then it (generally) does not happen. That is why Leaders have such a key responsibility in leading their people according to the revealed will of God. The Gift of Prophecy is the "focus gift" (1 Corinthians 14:1) to get us launched into a lifetime of "**edifying, exhorting and comforting**" the body of Christ through Spiritual Gifts operating out of our lives. The Gift of Prophecy is one of the "easier" gifts to function in because all we have to do is focus on the Lord, receive the message, and deliver it. We do not need to know who it is for (as it is for every one who will receive it), and it is a gift that inspires people to rise up and fulfil their destiny in the love of God!

- **Prophecy is a gift that we are all exhorted to desire and function in!**

So let us look at an aspect of the gift that perhaps we have not thought too much about in the past:

"Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy" (1 Corinthians 14:1).

The word “prophecy” is from the Greek word “propheteuo” and means “to foretell events, divine, speak under inspiration, exercise the prophetic office” (Strong’s); “to hold the office of a prophet; to do the work of a prophet, i.e. to speak forth, in declaration, warning or exhortation, as directed by the Spirit of God” (Bullinger’s).

The word “prophecy” means “1. a. a message of divine truth revealing God’s will. b. the act of uttering such a message . . . 3. the function, activity, or charismatic endowment of a prophet or prophets” (Collins).

The Gift of Prophecy functions when a Holy Spirit-filled believer is “in tune” with the Spirit of God, perceiving and discerning what God wants spoken out in a particular place or time amongst a certain people. He can only use those who are available to His voice and promptings . . . who are willing to step outside their “comfort zone” and allow the Lord to speak through them in a public manner with an audible voice.

- **We are exhorted to focus on prophesying!**

Why? Because God has chosen this means to “communicate” His word and will amongst the people. Prophesying is speaking forth under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, sharing a love message (or letter) from the heart of Jesus Christ to the people. We become a delivery person speaking on behalf of God. Because it is Holy Spirit inspired, it is a message from God through us to the people. If we fail to stir up, and step into the exercising of the Gift of Prophecy, then we are “robbing” others of the opportunity to hear God speaking to them in such a way that they will do something about their present condition of lifestyle.

Just in case any Christian is in doubt as to whether or not they can prophesy, the Scripture makes it very clear: **“For you can (or “may”) all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged”** (1 Corinthians 14:31).

- **It is God’s will for YOU to prophesy!**
- **It is God’s will for YOU to prophesy!!**

Why should we desire to “especially prophesy” (keeping in mind that the desire has to be strong enough within to actually move us from a position of desire to the practical application of the gift)? The Scriptures are clear:

“But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men” . . . “he who prophesies edifies the church” . . . “for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification” (1 Corinthians 14:3-5).

- **The prophetic voice of God is revealed through the Gift of Prophecy functioning.**

The gift is for the edification (“oikodome” = “to build up, the promotion of spiritual growth”), **exhortation** (“paraklesis” = “encouragement, a calling near or for, to stir up”) **and comfort** (“paramuthia” = “a consolation, a solace ministered with tenderness.” “Consolation” is “to alleviate grief or disappointment” and “solace” is “comfort in distress or disappointment, to find relief, cheer up”) **of the church** (“ekklesia” = “that which is called out” – Young’s; “In the New Testament, it denotes the redeemed community in its two-fold aspect. 1. The entire community of all who are called by and to Christ out of the world, the Church universal. 2. Every Church in which the character of the Church as a whole is seen in miniature” – Bullinger’s) ~ and if the church ever needed building up, it is NOW! The prophetic voice is to be uttered with a simple yet clear understanding ~ clear and simple enough for the people to grasp what you are saying clearly. **It is vital that we “catch” the prophetic words that come forth through the Gift of Prophecy.** We neglect them to our own hurt and hindrance in the things of God.

- **Spiritual Gifts are always to be for the edification of the church!**

“Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel (“1. to be superior to another, or others; surpass. 2. to be outstandingly good or proficient” – Collins. “Surpass” means “to be superior to in achievement or excellence; to overstep the limit or range of” – Collins)” (1 Corinthians 14:12).

- **When we understand the purpose of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, we should all desire to be the very best we can at exercising them!**

But its meaning goes deeper than that. This is not a “pride” statement, but we should also desire to be the very best in our church at excelling in the operation of Spiritual Gifts. Just imagine, for a moment, if that were so. Just imagine if the Spiritual Gifts were so recognized and valued for the purpose God gave them, that we all were sincerely seeking to be the best in the accuracy and functioning of them! If that were so, we would see a very different church emerge today! I pray it will be so, because the church can never come to true spiritual maturity without the Spiritual Gifts being given their rightful place ~ and functioning to prove that we really do value what God has given to us!

PROPHESYING THAT CONVICTS

Let us now consider an area of prophecy that we do not hear very much about today. It is the impact of prophecy upon those who hear it, and are not walking right with God:

“But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever (“apistos” = “disbelieving, disobedient” – Young’s; “without Christ; without faith; untrustworthy person; infidel” – Strong’s) **or an uninformed** (“idiotes” = “by implication an ignoramus; ignorant, rude,

unlearned” – Strong’s) ***person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all. And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you***” (1 Corinthians 14:24-25).

The word “convinced” comes from “elegcho” meaning “to convict” (Young’s); “to admonish, convict, convince, tell a fault, rebuke, reprove (Strong’s).

The word “judged” or “convicted” is “anakrino” meaning “to judge strictly, afresh” (Young’s); “to scrutinize, investigate, interrogate, determine, discern, search” (Strong’s).

The word “secrets” is “kruptos” meaning “concealed, hidden, secret” (Young’s); “concealed, private, hidden, inwardly, secret” (Strong’s).

The word “manifest” or “revealed” is from “phaneros” meaning “manifest, apparent” (Young’s); “apparent, visible, conspicuous” (Bullinger’s).

- **The Bible is revealing to us that if we Christians will give ourselves to the Gift of Prophecy, then He can use us (by that gift operating through us) to speak to the hearts of disobedient, unbelieving people in the meetings/gatherings in such a way that they will get right with God, put wrongs right in their lives, etc., because they will be convicted by the spirit and the message flowing out of us prophetically!**

The Gift of Prophecy in operation is a sign that Jesus is in the midst of His people: ***“Worship God! For the testimony*** (“marturia” = “evidence given, record, report, testimony, witness” -Strong’s; “a bearing witness, certifying; a testimony that informs as well as corroborates; that which any one witnesses or states concerning any person or thing” - Bullinger’s) ***of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy***” (Revelation 19:10).

Christians, when gathered together, should be there for OTHERS! For too long we have looked at church and meetings as being a place where we receive something from God. **But New Testament Christianity is firstly for GIVING! We gather together looking for the opportunity to work together with the Holy Spirit in order that we may bless and encourage the people in a positive way!** When we carry the heart attitude of firstly being there for God and others, then we will always receive a blessing back from God because of our obedience to Him. There is always someone waiting on the other side of our obedience! And we are always blessed for being obedient, because we see the benefits of that obedience releasing the blessings/answers of God through to us to the people.

Try to imagine what the Holy Spirit could do in our meetings if we all came with a heart to be available to God, and to one another, for the pure purpose of hearing what God says, and our prophesying it out in an edifying way to those assembled. The Holy Spirit would be “putting His finger” on issues of our hearts and lives in such a way that we would be moved to do something about. So many needs would automatically be ministered to in the beauty and presence of the flow of Spiritual Gifts ~ and it would mostly be done in a way that no one else needed to know what those issues were! The purpose and function of the Holy Spirit ministry through Spiritual Gifts is to **“edify, exhort and comfort”** the body of Christ. When the Holy Spirit is having His way in us, He is able to “speak” through us to others. God is glorified ~ and His body (the church) is edified!

For this kind of service or gathering to become a reality, our Christian ministers and leaders would need to be very secure in their leadership and trust their people sufficiently enough to allow them the time and space to function, even allowing for some mistakes, as we all need to be able to learn by experience in these things. As long as they are able to positively teach the guidelines ~ and the boundaries ~ for the functioning of the Spiritual Gifts, they would see their people becoming much more alive in the things of God. People would become much more outward looking than inward looking; they would be so encouraged to know and see that God wants to use them in this way. As mentioned before, when we do what God asks of us, others get blessed and encouraged ~ and we get blessed and encouraged in seeing what our obedience has produced. A body cannot be healthy and strong if it is not functioning according to the purposes for which it was designed.

- **True prophecy is “Spirit to spirit” ministry, and it brings forth good fruit.**

True prophecy spoken out in the name and love of Jesus Christ will always produce good fruit ~ and it is by their fruits that we can know whether a prophet is true or false (as well as discerning the spirit of what is said and done). All prophetic ministry is to be known by the fruit it produces.

On a number of different occasions (in my travels), the Lord has used me prophetically to speak into the lives of unsaved people. I did not know at the time of delivery that there were people present who were not even born-again Christians. Some had been attending church for years, but had never made a personal commitment of their lives to Jesus Christ. Yet when the prophetic ministry comes forth, something happens inside their spirits, and they respond quickly to Jesus. I have seen people of the Jehovah’s Witness, Mormon and Spiritualist churches, plus Christian church attendees, Occultists, etc., come to Christ within 24 hours of their receiving a prophetic word! We can “argue” with them intellectually for hours, but it does not convince nor convict them. But the moment they hear a word from the Holy Spirit through us (ordinary people like you and me), they are impacted like never before. I have personally seen them

come running to the front of a meeting to get right with God; weeping their way to a genuine salvation experience; backsliders restored; the call of God renewed; families reconciled, and so many more examples. Putting it very simply, there is no substitute for the Holy Spirit ministry activated in our lives in a loving and compassionate way! Bible knowledge can touch the heart and mind, but it is the power of the Holy Spirit that impacts the spirit!

It is no wonder, then, that the enemy wants to fill our ears with all kinds of “voices, opinions, teachings that lack the power of God,” etc, to try and take us “off course” from fulfilling the very purpose for which we are to be filled with the Holy Spirit! ~ even to the point that, instead of our walking in the anointing of the Holy Spirit to bring these things about, we actually finish up producing worms ~ and a stench (spiritually). And he (the devil) doesn’t mind how many worms we produce!!! Not at all! In fact he loves seeing maggots!

- **If there is one thing the devil is trying to stop us from achieving, it is our being totally available to the Holy Spirit and His Gifts to do His bidding.**

“How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm (“psalmos” = “a song of praise on an instrument” – Young’s; “a touching twang, e.g. of a bowstring; of stringed instruments, a playing, music . . . a psalm or song in commemoration of mercies received, rather than of praise to God” – Bullinger’s), ***has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation*** (“unveiling, uncovering; of facts and truths, disclosure, revelation; of persons, appearing, manifestation” – Bullinger’s), ***has an interpretation*** (“harmeneia” = “explanation” – Young’s). ***Let all things be done for edification***” (1 Corinthians 14:26).

- **It is all about giving out one to the other, with the view that people will be edified in faith in Jesus Christ.**

When the people are contributing as a result of their being “connected” and “in touch” with the Holy Spirit, there will always flow a positive message of benefit from the heart of God to those listening. For me, personally, I am living today in the fulfilment of many prophetic words spoken over my life ~ most of which came in the course of a meeting (or elsewhere), and quite unplanned or organized. When the Holy Spirit has His way, He will always speak to the people and glorify Jesus Christ in every way!

Voices, Worms, *and* The Prophetic Ministry? Yes, there is a connection. If we do not get the voice right we will produce worms, and the prophetic will suffer. But when we do get the voice right, we are able to flow with the Holy Spirit and “make a difference” in so many lives wherever we go. Let us, then, make every effort to know the true voice of God, eliminate the wrong voices, and give ourselves to prophesying that which God puts within our heart.

Be encouraged to open your heart and life to God today. **Make yourself available for the Holy Spirit to speak to you, that you can prophesy His message out to the people when you are amongst them.** As long as you keep within the guidelines of **“edification, exhortation, and comfort”** (1 Corinthians 14:3) ~ and are motivated by love for the people ~ you will never do any harm or damage amongst the people.

- **God is waiting to speak through YOU ~ today!**
- **You can hear His voice and prophesy!**

Books, booklets and manuals by **Rodney W. Francis** (and others):

Books:

- Developing Prophetic Ministry (*English and Nepalese*)
- Equipping For Leadership
- Divine Healing – A Key To The Growth Of The Christian Church! (*English, Nepalese, Telugu India, Tamil India, and Italian languages*)
- You Can Measure Your Love For God (*English, Nepalese, Telugu India, and Italian*)
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Rodney W. Francis was converted in 1959 at 17 years of age, and received the baptism in the Holy Spirit in the midst of a herd of cows at 18 years of age. There he received the call of God to preach. Doors opened up for him to commence preaching a short time later, and he has been preaching ever since. His ministry has taken him to over 30 nations. He is the Founder/Director of “The Gospel Faith Messenger,” a many-faceted Christian Ministry that reaches out to multiplied thousands of people around the world through Gospel literature, books, manuals, E-Mail ministries, the World Wide Web, 3 Bible Correspondence Courses (free), International Training Schools, Prophetic Conferences, Training of Prophetic Teams, Personal Prophetic Ministry, Schools Of The Holy Spirit, Church meetings, Counselling, audio cassettes, DVD’s, etc. For more than 40 years (commenced April 1964) this Ministry has impacted hundreds of thousands of people in over 90 nations.

Rodney and his wife, Jean, live by faith, and the Ministry has a number of dedicated, voluntary workers that enable us to make the financial donations go almost 100% toward reaching people for Christ. Your ongoing prayer support of “The GFM” Ministry is greatly appreciated.

