

## We Need to Hear

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As transcribed by Jane Vaughn

Mark 7:31-37. “*And again (speaking of Jesus), departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, He came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coast of Decapolis. And they bring unto Him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech Him (Jesus) to put His hand upon him. And He took him aside from the multitude, and put His fingers into his ears, and He spit, and touched his tongue; And looking up to heaven, [Jesus] sighed, and saith unto him, ‘Eph-pha-tha,’ that is, ‘Be opened.’ And straightway, his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain. And [Jesus] charged them that they should tell no man: but the more He charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it; And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: He maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.*”

We sing, “Oh, God, You’re good! You’re good! You’re good!” and I love that because it just says it all! “God, You are so good!” Now, if you’re highly educated and deeply spiritual ☺ you would say the same thing this way: “Almighty, most gracious Ancient of Days. Thou art altogether...” and so on, ☺ but it’s just easier to say, “God, You are really good! Oh, God, I vote ‘yes’ on You. You have done for me what no one else could do! What a good God! I worship You!” When our hearts are filled with that kind of praise and thanksgiving, we can begin to imagine the elation of this deaf man, healed by the hand of God!

Let’s look at our text in the Gospel of Mark, verse 31. Not a terribly exciting or life-changing verse, but what it says is, “*He got from one place to another.*” ☺ And I love verse 32 also: “*And they bring unto Him....*” So, I have to ask: “*They* who? Who are *they*?” If you check backwards in the chapter as I did, for some identifying information, you can’t find any. “*And they*” somebody. Aren’t we impressed with ourselves? We think we’re so important. ☺ The Lord just looks down and matter-of-factly says, “*And they.*” “*They* worshipped me.” “*They* were led in song by...” “*They...*” You see, it simply was not important to God for us to know who *they* were.

It is this man’s condition I want us to look at – that is important. When we’re in a pivotal period or *transition* (to employ an overused word today) – when we’re in a *moment of time* when we’ve been somewhere (whether good or bad), and we’re going somewhere (we don’t know if it’ll be good or bad) – ***we need to be able to hear the voice of God!*** We need His counsel!

It is a common thing for people, believers anyway, to inquire of me (and others), “*What’s God doing today?*” They’re just being honest about the difficulty *they’re* having in hearing God. And they really don’t know or understand the times. There’s such a temptation for us to – lie – ☺ by making up something that sounds lofty or very spiritual. ☺ The reason is, when someone asks me, “What is God saying, Sister Iverna? Dr. Tompkins?” I know that person has confidence that I’ve heard something. So, I’m tempted to say (somewhat pompously or piously), “Well, I feel that – what the Lord is saying today...” – when the truth is, I often don’t know any more than the one who is asking. ☺

Too often, we have come to a time or place when we become overly dependent on hearing the voice of God – *through someone else!* And we go to all sorts of meetings like little birds in a nest with our *ears* tuned in, so eager to hear something like their little gaping beaks are looking for food. At that searching time, we are, unfortunately, available or open to hear *anything*, because we have decided this person is a man or woman of God and everything they tell me is going to be absolute and right. **That is the most dangerous position that exists for a Christian!**

This caution does not (in any way) undermine our respect for the authority inherent in the offices of the apostle – or prophet – or evangelist – or pastor – or teacher ministries as they function properly in the Church today. The discussion here is not about being submitted to authority. I’m talking about *knowing what God is saying*. That way, when I (or you) hear a “word” given (or preached), purportedly from the

Lord, it constantly becomes a confirmation of what I *already know* from *Him*. That's what prophecy (and especially "personal prophecy") should be – confirming what you've *already heard* from God – not some surprise directive.

If every time you hear a recognized speaker preach, you anticipate hearing something you've never heard before – you're like a little baby, lying in a crib – "Waa-waa. Gimme a ba-ba!" ☺ A humorous picture perhaps, but there is an important point to be made. **What God wants today is to bring us all up higher**, and most particularly those of us who have lived the bottle-experience far too long. Some of you have been throwing your bottle out of the crib. The leaders come along, pick it up, and put it back in your mouth – because that's easier than listening to you whine. Hello. It is also easier than weaning you from the simple milk diet (like spiritual Simulac) and preparing heartier meals (real "meat") that will help you grow! Is that too hard a truth for you to hear? Think about it though. This scenario is true too much of the time.

What is happening today is that the Lord is trying to get the attention of every individual believer. Everyone of you, hopefully, come to the preaching of the Word with open ears to hear what the Spirit is saying – not attempting to obtain a map or formula of what someone else did to get where they are spiritually – "Five Easy Steps to – this or that." That just will not work any more. Someone else's roadmap to spiritual maturity was *customized by God* for that person, and will not accomplish the same results for anyone else. How do I know that? I'm 76 years old, and have tried it all. ☺ Every time you see something *you* aspire to having or being, the temptation is to get the "how-to" book. But our Lord is a God of individuals. Before He grants a *corporate* blessing, He first prepares the individuals.

We've been going through that in the Body of Christ and now we're coming to another place. What is He about to do now? He's about to pour out a corporate blessing that will not be able to be pin-pointed in *this* one place or *that* one place or *that* other place – but it's going to be poured out in the *WORLD!* "*All nations. . .*" We are going to fulfill the prophecy on earth before we actually stand before the Throne. Revelation 15 says, "*For all nations shall come and worship before Him, for His judgments are made manifest*" (v.4). We're going to see that on earth and, the preparatory *work* is already beginning in individuals.

God has a word especially for you and you need to hear it for yourself. I'm no longer going to stand up in front with a long line forming and give individual prophetic utterances as was done in the past. If you have to hear the Word of the Lord through me, you don't want to know what He's saying because what I hear Him saying is just two little words: "Grow up!" ☺ "God bless you, grow up!" (5 words! ☺).

The Israelites in their wilderness journey had manna rained down from heaven until they got to the new land, almost 40 years later. Think about that. God provided food for them – liberally – until they reached the *end of their wanderings* (Selah) and were ready to embark on the fulfillment of the Promise. We could liken this to our own growth process into spiritual maturity. When the manna freely rains down, and all I have to do is pick it up, I get used to that. I really do. It's so much easier that way – even if it's the same old flavor (another "selah"). "Hey! *It's from heaven.*" And we are too easily satisfied with what's easiest to digest. Oh, there's a lesson there if you can hear it!

Then a time came when the Lord said, "*You're in the new land now, you have to learn to fix your own food. Prepare vittles.*" Joshua told them, "*Prepare some food (victuals)*" (1:11). "But I don't know how to cook. I haven't been doing that for years!" "Well, you're going to get real hungry then, because the manna isn't going to be rained on you so freely anymore. It's going to be *meat*, and it's going to be served. And when the *meat* of God's Word is served, it will be such a confirming thing that your understanding will complement it like vegetables on the plate!"

Do you honestly think you know everything already? I don't know it all. Wonderful astute men of God – Pastors on the platform – don't know it all. Is that a shock to you? The truth is we all are still growing. In order to be a real leader – here's a truth for leaders – we only have to be one step ahead of the crowd.

Not miles and miles in front, just one step ahead. We can then say, “*Follow us. Come on, follow me as I follow Christ*” (1Cor.11:1), which means, “I’m learning as I go, but I’m following Him as closely as I can.”

God wants us to be constantly growing – growing up in our understanding of spiritual truths and in our commitment to His ways. In Hebrews chapter 5, the writer upbraids the readers, calling them “*dull of hearing*” (v.11b). The text continues by describing what he means by that condition: “*For when the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food. For everyone that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But solid food belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*” (Heb.5:12-14).

Oh, that we would not resist the move of God in each of our individual lives by choosing the bottle, the milk, over the meat! We need to allow the Lord to remove that which impedes us, causing us to be “*dull of hearing*” or delayed in our growth.

“*And they bring to Him one that was deaf*” (Mt.7:32).

**What stops us from hearing?** If God always is speaking, why is it that I only occasionally hear Him? We will look at 6 possibilities as hindrances to hearing God’s voice.

- 1) The first thing that shuts out our ability to hear God is **indecision**.

We can learn about this when Jesus taught from the familiar parable: the sower plants the seed and before it grows the devil comes and snatches it away (Mt.13:19). That happens because we don’t make a decision when we first hear the Word. For years in the church, I have watched people do this “delayed action” or lack of response. The Spirit of conviction comes with the presentation of His Word in the message delivered, and you can actually watch some people contemplate what their response might be. The Lord opens their ears for hearing, but they begin to *think*, or rationalize, “*You know, part of what she is saying could be true.*” Then the Holy Spirit pinpoints something: “*You need to do this,*” or, “*This is what I want from you,*” or, “*I’m speaking to you.*” And you think (we’ll pretend it’s you ☺), “*You know, I’m going to **think** on this. I don’t want to make a hasty decision.*” Oh, God forbid you should have a leaping response! ☺ “*I just don’t want to get caught up in group psychology. Just because hundreds of people are responding to the altar invitation, I don’t want to go because – I’m a free-thinker...*” Oh, yes, you are free to *think*! But you need to learn to **think with God!**

I’ve seen people take a “white-knuckle” positioning – hanging on to the way they are, not wanting to consider change, yet experiencing the conviction of the Holy Spirit – and then they leave the building without responding to His promptings. By the time “you” get to your car, the atmosphere of faith ushered in with the Presence of the Holy Spirit that was there in the meeting to activate *your* faith and enable you to obey, is no longer stirring you. Now, when that element of faith is missing, human logic takes over. Still just pretending this is “you” ☺ – in your process of thinking it over, you’re not thinking with the mind of Christ available to you (Phil.2:5), you’re thinking through the rationalization of human thought – a human’s mind in action – and you’re contemplating: “*If I do this...*” “*If this was really God...*” “*If that...*” “*I’m not sure...*” “*I’m just going to wait...*” That wait-and-see attitude, my Friend, will cause *deafness* – in you. While others soar on into what they’ve heard from God, responding to His voice, you sit in your silence (no voice of God being discerned) and contemplate.

- 2) The second blockage to hearing God is **ignorance**.

“*How shall ye hear without a preacher?*” scripture asks (Rom.10:14). Now this has nothing to do with *me* as a preacher. This isn’t speaking about *this* preacher or *that* preacher. It’s speaking about the spoken

Word, the *rhema* of God. **He** is the preacher! It is God Himself that quickens His Word in your heart. *He* makes it come alive and fills it with His meaning for you!

One of the reasons you (not *you* this time, but some other “you” ☺), one of the reasons they’re not hearing God is because they never open The (Recipe) Book or read the *directions*. This is how you prepare vittles (Josh.1:11 *victuals*; food; provisions) for yourself: you get into The Book, the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit who inspired 44 or more men of old over a period of some 1400 years to put this down in print so we could read it – that same Holy Spirit takes the written Word and absolutely, indelibly imprints it in *you* (Jer.31:33; Heb.8:10). You will see things in the Word I don’t see, and I will see things you don’t see – for your “Word” is your dinner! It is your sustenance. It is your “meat.” The revelation of God is what nourishes your spirit and causes you to grow.

If we never feast on His Word, if we allow the busy-ness of life to steal away our daily times with God, how will we ever learn what He has to say in The Book? It will not come into us sufficiently only on Sunday mornings in the congregational meeting. That is good and a very necessary part of our Christian walk (Heb.10:25), but our real “filling station” needs to be alone with God. We must become knowledgeable in the Word. “*Thy Word have I hid in my heart – that I might not miss the mark*” (Ps.119:11).

3) A third reason we don’t hear is *impulsiveness*.

Remember when David decided to do something God had not voted “yes” on? David was determined to build the Temple. Nathan the prophet looked at his King, and *in the natural*, looking through man’s eyes from a purely human perspective, David seemed like the *logical* one to do it (2Sam.7:3). Besides, it was in his heart to build something wonderful for God (vs.2).

Pastors, too often we fill positions in our churches *impulsively*. We choose someone who has all the right capabilities for the task, or we reward them for longevity of service. “*Oh, God forgive us for not seeking Your face, Your desire, Your perfect will for every decision we make!*” Without carefully hearing His voice, we subsequently put the wrong person in the position, in the wrong timing, even though at the *right* time they might be the perfect fit, but we act precipitously in the moment.

Nathan says, “*I think that’s a marvelous plan, David.*” When Nathan went home, God said, “*Nathan, I have a little thing to say to you. That is not My plan!*” (vvs.4,5).

Oh, if you’ve ever tried *anything* that was of your own doing alone, at any period of time in your life, you know: you – never – want – to – do – *that* – again! You can *fast* and *pray* and scream and threaten God: “*This is my plan, and You bless it! – in Jesus’ name,*” of course. But darlin’, if it isn’t His plan, He most likely will not bless your human endeavor! No matter how clever it is, or sound the idea, God will bless what He inspires in you. Don’t be in such a hurry to make a decision that you do not wait patiently to hear His voice or specific instruction.

4) Another reason that we don’t hear is *incapability* – literal bondage to the enemy.

If we don’t respond when God speaks to us, the enemy has a strategy of coming and making it *impossible* for us to hear. This would be closely related to the first hindrance we noted, but here we are looking at the enemy’s activity rather than our indecision. The truth is we always have an active role to play when dealing with either God or the devil.

God is looking for a willing heart that leads to our response of obedience when we hear His voice. By contrast, the enemy lays in wait for the opportune moment (see Luke 4:13) to snag, ensnare, derail, or otherwise impede our moving on with God. The enemy is sneaky and deliberate, like a thief, and his purpose is “*to steal, kill, and destroy*” (Jn.10:10a; 1Pet.5:8). He will set up an ambush to take us by surprise.

Our defense against this subterfuge of the enemy is primarily the *continual building of our walk with God*. But, we also must *actively resist* the enemy's wiles, his schemes and trickery, launched against us (Eph.6:11; Jas.4:7; 1Pet.5:8,9). Not participating in *this spiritual war*, for whatever reasons, will render one subject to the enemy's will and *incapable* of hearing God. Let us not be ignorant of his devices, nor fear entering the fray. The victory is ours because ultimately the battle is the Lord's (1Sam.17:47; 2Chron.20:15; 32:8). He equips us and provides everything we need, but we have to enter in and wield our swords (Eph.6:10-18).

5) Then there's the problem of *inactivity*.

Inactivity, or failure to immediately respond to Him, causes us to forget what we have heard. We would be embarrassed as preachers if we stood at the exit greeting the congregation at the close of a service, and when the people said, "*That was a marvelous message,*" if we would follow that up with, instead of "*Thank you so much,*" say, "*What did you hear?*" Obviously, you know I would do that – and have done it. ☺ So many people just stutter and stumble and turn red-in-the-face and say, "*Well, I don't remember everything, but I really enjoyed it. It was such an inspiring message.*" ☺

We need to retain what God says to us, especially personally, and that is accomplished by acting on it without reservation. "*Today, if you will, harden not your hearts; hear the voice of God...*" (Ps.95:7,8 paraphrased).

I love Elijah. I love his story and everything about him. He was the kind of man you could be proud of knowing. He just took his stand and that was it. Until a woman went after him! ☺ and then he kind of "wimped out." ☺ When she threatened him, he panicked and ran as far as he could go (1Kngs.19:2,3). Then God had to wake him up and *feed* him (vvs.5,6) and give him crutches to get him to the Mount (Horeb; vs.8). And when he got up there, Elijah revealed by his conversation with the Lord, his attitude about himself. It's called "pity - party."

"*What are you doing up here, Elijah?*" (1Kngs.19:9). His response was pathetic and whining. It went something like this, "*Oh thank you for asking. I've served You all these years. I've been faithful to You. I've paid my tithe. I've given offerings. I have never missed a meeting. I've spoken everything You ever told me to speak, and I'm the only good thing You've got going for You.*" ☺ (vs.10). Most of that is accurate from the text ☺ – at least true from the standpoint that I paraphrased what he literally said. But basically, that is what he was saying. "*Everybody else has flaked out, God. And I'm sick of being the only one who takes a stand for You!*"

Oh, how many of *us* have felt that way at times? We have sung this in years gone by: "*I've sacrificed a lot of things to walk this narrow way. I gave up fame and fortune – and I'm worth a lot to Thee.*" Oh, what a sad song that is! And then I hear Him gently speak to me these words from the same old hymn, "*I left a Throne of Glory – and counted it but loss. My feet were nailed in anguish upon a cruel cross!*"

Come on, Church! It's time for us to open our ears again!

Here's what I hear as I travel in the Church. I hear people my age and older wearily saying, "*Let the young folks do it. We've been fightin' long enough. We've been....*" Or, "*God knows we've tried. It's time for the young people to take it over.*" They can't take it over! They don't know a lot – yet. ☺ The truth is, I'll lean on their enthusiasm – you can believe that! I need it. I love their strength and daringness! Oh, I do love that! But they need my wisdom, because there is a wisdom that does not come from books – it comes from *living*. And we can't just die off and say, "*Hey, I hope you do a better job than I did.*" We need the strengths God puts in each of us – in all of us – from one generation to the other.

6) Another reason we don't hear His voice is – *selective hearing*.

We are programmed to hear what we choose to hear. I'm so sorry I have done this many times in my life. *"I want to hear this, God. I've got to know."*

I remember a time when I was making a very significant decision. I'd received an offer in ministry that would mean relocating geographically, among a whole lot of other inconvenient things. So, I determined that I simply had to hear from God – "Yes" or "No." I needed to know, definitively, what He wanted me to do. So, I went on an extended fast – because we foolishly figure that's like twisting His arm to get whatever it is we're after. ☺ When that didn't work ☺ I enlisted other people to pray with me. I had a multitude of people praying: *"She's gotta know, God, Yes or No."* Now there was a deadline to this offer – if I did not respond to them by such-and-such a date, the offer would be rescinded. And so, I kept TELLING GOD – in Jesus' Name, of course – *"I have to know by this time! They need to know!"*

Days went by and I heard nothing! Finally, I heard that still small voice, right after I said to Him, *"Lord, tomorrow, they have to know my answer."* He said, *"They' who?"* That was not what I wanted to hear. ☺ *"They' – the people who made the offer! You know who 'they' are!"* ☺ It sounds humorous in the retelling of it so many years later, but I was totally serious at the moment. The end of the story is that *they* called me the next day, and through *their* pressure I said "Yes" and made one of the biggest mistakes of my life. I entered into a horrendous two years.

Learn from me, dear friends. Oh, if only I had waited for His reply. *"But, if you had waited past the deadline, they would have withdrawn the offer."* May I say, "DUH?" I mean – maybe, just maybe – that's what God had in mind? If they had withdrawn the offer, I wouldn't have had to make a decision. It would have been decided for me and I would have been spared the lessons I learned the hard way.

*They* saw this man (Mk.7:32a) – he couldn't hear. To their credit, they brought him to Jesus. In addition, the man couldn't speak right as he had an impediment in his speech. If you can't *hear*, you don't speak right – you just *talk* (Selah). *"And they bring him to Jesus."* That was good, but then they did it – just like we do – they told Jesus what to do next (vs.32b). We call it – *prayer* – giving God unknown information. *"Now, Lord, this is so-and-so, and here's his problem and here's what I want... I want You to put Your hands on him, and I want this-and-that to happen."*

Jesus was not being ungrateful or spiteful or in any way contrary to *them* when He took the man aside, away from the multitude – as well as away from *them* (vs.33a). But hear this: you're not going to tell God what to do in the lives of the people you bring to Him. He is Lord. He is the Almighty! He is the Omniscient One! He knows all the details. And He will do what's in His heart to do, and the purposes of God will be fulfilled!

So, Jesus takes the man away from the very ones that brought him. Why? I think the man was very dependent on them – any time anything was expressed, whether sign language or lip reading or however he understood anything, it was through these "*they*" – the ones that brought him. Jesus wanted to deal with him *intimately* and *personally* apart from "*them*." Now Church, that's exactly where the Body of Christ is today. God wants that kind of personal, intimate relationship with every individual who names the name of Jesus, and calls Him Savior and Lord!

Jesus separated the man from "*them*" and then He touched him. He put His fingers in the man's ears and said, *"Be opened"* (vs.33b). That's okay with us – we're used to that in our circles – the laying on of hands. It's all right. We see lots of God's emissaries doing this sort of thing. People come down to the altar, we lay hands on them, and perhaps call out demons, and so forth, and that's all wonderful. We're comfortable with the laying on of hands. But then – then Jesus spit on his tongue! (vs.33c)

I wonder how badly we really want the touch of God! – Think about it. *"You're not going to spit on my tongue!"* *"You're not gonna force me to – DANCE!"* *"I'm not going..."* And we lay it all out for Him in detail. *"This is not... This just is not the way I am."* *"Uhhh, ... the people..."* *"But I'm ..."*

I can just hear the conversations with God. He says, *“I created you. I know what you are.”* *“Well, I’m not emotional!”* *“Yeah, you are. I made you just like Me.”* *“But, I’m not given to – weeping, and... and...”* *“Yeah, you are. You weep over things – that matter. I stood over Jerusalem and wept. ‘Ohhhhh, what I would have done for you, Jerusalem, but you wouldn’t have it!’”* (Mt.23:37; Lk.19:41).

Are you okay, Church? Is that too pointed? Too honest? Too close to reality? Your reality? You see, it’s one-on-one – each of us alone with God. That’s what opens our understanding. And when our hearing is opened, then we are candidates to experience the mouth of God ::*spit!*:: *“So then”* says the Word to one of the churches in the Book of Revelation (3:14-16), *“because you are neither hot nor cold,”* – then what does it say? *“But you’re lukewarm. I will spit you out”* instead of putting My spittle in you!

I watch this happen in churches everywhere. People sit side-by-side in the pews and when the Word hits with fresh revelation, one responds in awe: *“Ooooh! Ahhh!”* It’s God’s personal revelation for them: *“Oh, my God! I see it!”* Yet the other person, sitting right next to the first, is thinking, *“Bah – humbug. That’s nothing.”* What’s the difference between the two? One of them has determined, *“You’re not gonna put SPIT in my mouth! I’m not gonna take it this way, not through this vessel (speaker)! I don’t believe... I... I...”* You see, the response of such people is all about *them* and what they want rather than being focused on God and His plan. But the first one says, *“Lord, if it comes from Your mouth – I’ll take it! I want it! I want whatever You have to be in me!”*

Then the man in Mark’s story could speak right (Mk.7:35). Oh yes. Of course I think that speaks of *witnessing*. That’s our first thought. *“Oh! Look what the Lord has done!”* He could sing it with us. But I think more pointedly, it refers to the fact that he could speak – *accurately* – *“I know Whom I have believe and am persuaded...”* (2Tim.1:12). And when you know that, Sir, or Lady, when you have had that intimate and personal touch of God, no one can talk you out of it! You know that you know that you know. And you don’t have to say, *“Well, I don’t know – if it was God, it seems to me that...”* That’s the human mind trying to reason. It’s the universal problem that exists between our ears. But when the ear is open to the Spirit – *“Oh, take heed what ye hear”* (Mk.4:24). *“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches!”* (Rev.2 and 3).

The hearing ear. Listen to this verse: *“As it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long, for we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.”* *“What’s that got to do with – this?”* you may be asking. Oh, I’m sorry. I should have given you the preceding verse – because that’s the one we like. ☺ *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness (feeling uncovered), peril, sword?”* This is Romans 8:35. You probably memorized that verse! *“Oh, yes! We love that verse – ‘Who shall be able to separate us?’”* But the next verse says, *“As it is written... we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.”* That’s an example of *partial* or *selective* hearing. I not only hear but remember the promise – but not the condition or circumstances that may accompany its fulfillment.

I grew up with a “Promise Box” in our home. Do you remember those too? Some of you may recall them. We had ours on the kitchen counter and every morning each one of us selected a promise card at random. Unfortunately, what was on those little cards was all *partial hearing!* Instead of printing the whole verse in its context and thereby truly experiencing the mouth of God, we came away with just the promises alone. Church, we need to understand, among other truths, God is not shocked when we go through some negative things in life. He isn’t even surprised when we trip or fall!

When God chose Peter to be the first great messenger to the world (Ac.2:14ff), after almost a hundred and twenty others experienced Him personally and intimately at the same time in the same place (Ac.2:1-4), did God not *know* Peter was imperfect? ☺ Every time Peter messed up, do you think God said, *“Oh, I wish I hadn’t appointed him!”* That should be a very *freeing* message to each of us today. ☺ *“Thank You, Lord! You have chosen us and ordained us to go and bring forth fruit and our fruit shall remain!”* (Jn.15:16; also Eph.2:10).

Here's another passage we love but often select from it what we want to hear – Mark 10:29-30: “*And Jesus answered and said, ‘Verily I say unto you, there is no man that has left house or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My sake, and the Gospel’s, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time...’*” We love that! What a verse! “*...houses, and brothers, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and land – an hundredfold!*” Oh, but wait! Look again more carefully! There are two other little words in there we tend to overlook: “*with persecutions.*”

It is so interesting how quickly we respond to people who say, “*If this was really God, you shouldn’t be going through these things.*” That sort of comment sounds to me a lot like the Garden – of Eden. “*Hath God said?*” (Gen.3:1) The serpent-enemy implies, “*Doesn’t God love you? Didn’t He create you and give you this beautiful Garden?*” Eve’s response was, “*He told us not to eat from that particular tree. He said if we did, we’d die.*” “*Aw, He didn’t mean die die.*” ☺

Tell the truth. How many times have we listened to that silliness? You see, the voice of the enemy never is truth! Never! Did God *want* you to go through persecutions? Of course He did – and does! You’d never get out of the crib otherwise! But the rest of the provision is that He intends to go through them with us – if we will allow that!

Touched by Jesus – experienced His mouth – and the man was able to speak *right*.

Someone recently handed me a paraphrase of Psalm 63. This is an example of “*speaking right.*” Think about what it says as you read this Psalm:

*“God! You are my God! I will adamantly pursue You. My mental energies are eager to please You. My physical being needs You in my lonely and avid confidences, where there is no role model for me to learn Your boldness and power, security and strength.*

*This is an hour to understand. Only then, I am able to mentally perceive Your holiness, because Your rebuke, which includes Your favor, Your kindness and pity, is better than life!*

*My lips shall praise You. (I can speak right).*

*This is my choice! Thus, my behaviors will be an active adoration to You as long as I live. I will accept my potential capability within my definite and conspicuous position, as well as the mark of Your individuality and authority and character with my identity.*

*My intellectual reasoning will be satisfied with Your choice of acceptance and anointing for me. And my mind will be transparently open to Your joy in every natural boundary of my life.”*

Now – let us acknowledge together that this is an hour in which we must **hear and understand** what the Spirit is saying to us. Further, it is a time for **adamantly pursuing** His ways above all else, including our own! May we set out to correct each hindrance that exists in us, interfering with our ability to hear His voice.