

Paradise Lost and Restored: Hearing God's Voice (Part 5)

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I. Introduction

How do you recover from a hopeless and depressing situation? There you are, no job and every interview you've been on ended in, "We've decided to hire someone else." You can't pay your rent so you're about to lose your home. Then you lose your apartment and now you're living out of your car. How do you even begin to come back from this? Or perhaps you have a great job, i.e., it pays great. There's only one problem, you hate it and you can't find another job that pays the same. And if you take a lesser job, you won't be able to fulfill your financial obligations: mortgage, car payments, college tuitions, and on, and on. You're stuck and miserable. Is there any way out of these situations? How can we find the life we were meant to live, even if we've been living the wrong one for twenty years?

II. God is Speaking to You, Do You Hear Him.....If You Don't, Why Not?

What keeps you from hearing God's voice? Satan is the one who keeps us from hearing God's voice but he does it in several ways, all of which are designed to steal your identity and keep you away from God:

Are you facing God or away from Him? Satan uses life to get you to turn away from God, that is, to convince you that God either doesn't exist or if He does, He certainly doesn't care about your personal problems. The question is, "Are you facing God?" Who told you that God doesn't care? Who told you that God doesn't exist? Atheists aren't born, they're made by life's circumstances. Terrorists aren't born, they're made. When Paul was terrorizing the Church, was he facing God or away from Him? He thought he was facing God, but he wasn't, Acts 9; Galatians 1. Losers aren't born, they're made. Why did Moses think he couldn't lead Israel out of Egypt? Who told him he couldn't, Exodus 2:11-15; 3:11; 4:1, 10, 13? And more importantly, what was the truth, was he a deliverer, Exodus 3:7-10, 12, 15-22; 4:2-9, 11-17; 15:21-31?

Forgiveness, we have to be able to receive it and give it. When we sin, we have to **receive** God's forgiveness and when someone sins against us, we have to **give** forgiveness. If we fail to do either, we won't hear God's voice: refusing to repent and confess our sin keeps us from receiving God's forgiveness, which separates us from Him, 1 John 1:5, 9. Refusing to give forgiveness to those who've sinned against us, also cuts us off from God's voice, Matthew 6:15. Thus, refusing to live in God's forgiveness leads to anger, bitterness, stress, guilt, and shame, which Satan loves to use against us, 2 Corinthians 2:11.

Unbelief, when we refuse to believe, we cut ourselves off from God, Matthew 13:53-58; John 8:24. We cut ourselves off from His voice, John 5:31-47. This is one of Satan's biggest weapons and it doesn't just plague atheists, it plagues Christians, Matthew 14:28-31. If you want to hear His voice, you have to believe, Matthew 9:27-30; Hebrews 11:6. Thus, it's not that God doesn't speak; it's that our unbelief (for whatever reason) drowns it out and thus we can't hear His voice.

Self-hatred, those who hate themselves exhibit several characteristics. They are: judgmental, perfectionistic, demand the impossible of themselves and others, are fearful of the future, feel alone/abandoned especially during important decisions, are preoccupied with their own guilt, and have a tendency to compete for position and success. King Saul was like this: 1 Samuel 13:8-13—he's fearful of the future, feels alone/abandoned especially during an important decision. 14:24-45—he's being perfectionistic and demanding the impossible of others. 15:1-28—he's fearful and likely felt alone/abandoned during this key moment. 18:5-9—he's judgmental and competing for position and success. 24:8-22—he's judgmental and consumed with his own guilt so he seeks to kill David. 28:8-19—he's consumed with his own guilt, fearful of the future, therefore, he doesn't know what else to do.

How do we recover from Satan's attacks? God says that we are something wonderful, that our life has a purpose, Psalm 139:13-14, 16. But when we look at our life, we don't feel wonderful, instead we feel hopeless. Satan loves it when we do this, when we let our circumstances define who we are and what our life is/will be. It is then easy for Satan to take us from hating ourselves to hating and doubting God.

In order to overcome Satan's attacks you have to put on God's armor, but notice how much His armor has to do with truth, faith, and His voice/Word, Ephesians 6:13-17—Satan's attacks will bounce off of you if you believe. And since every one of Satan's attacks is based on lies, the counter is God's truth. So when you start believing your self-critical thoughts which tell you that your situation is hopeless, that there's no way out, you have to confess that lie and ask God for the truth. For example,

“Lord, I believe that my relationship with my wife will never get better. I don't believe that she or I will ever change. That's why I'm having an affair. But I know that this is a lie, so I must confess to you that I have believed a lie. And now I need You to show me the truth. Show me the power of Your ability to change me and my marriage.”

III. Conclusion

The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.