

The Listening Ear

It was a Sunday afternoon.

I sat reading my Bible. Suddenly I was arrested by a word that just didn't seem in place in its context. It was the word "obey." And somehow it seemed to me that obedience wasn't the significant thought of the passage, and that a word other than *obey* would better convey its message.

So I got out my *Young's Concordance* and searched in its some 1,200 pages. And you know what I found? According to Mr. Young, the Hebrew and Greek words translated "obey" or "obedience" almost always have to do with hearing.

This is true in every instance but one in the Old Testament, and all but four in the New.

Now this is not just an interesting tidbit of biblical information.

It holds, it seems to me, the potential of transforming our very responses to Almighty God.

And, the seeming exceptions themselves reinforce the transforming reality.

One Greek word ten times translated "obey" in the New Testament, according to Mr. Young, actually has the root meaning "to persuade." And, persuasion with words is accomplished through the ear.

Lovingly God seeks to persuade us to listen to His still small voice and to do that which pleases Him and benefits us.

You see, the world, the flesh and the devil have this concept of obedience to God all twisted around to make it look unattractive and unappealing to justify our rebellion and resistance to God.

But God never yet asked any man or woman, boy or girl, to do anything that was not the very best for them ... that would not bring them maximum benefit.

Now, we simply don't naturally believe this.

But God's Holy Spirit is in the business of persuading us that obeying God is good and acceptable and perfect (Rom. 12:2).

We need to hear, to listen, to pay attention to, His voice rather than the voices to which we have all our lives been accustomed to listening and responding.

And we need to begin to become readily, gladly responsive to the still small voice speaking within.

This is the secret of practical spiritual victory in our daily lives.

It takes our relationship with our God out of the works, law, flesh category into the faith, grace, and Spirit category.

God never has valued mere external obedience to His commandments expedited by the sinful flesh.

But He values greatly that willing, loving response to the loving wooing of His own voice in the heart and spirit of the responsive individual.

So it is always God that causes us to will and to do of His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13). All we ever have to do from the first day of our Christian walk is rest in His absolute ability, responding as He enables and empowers to the loving voice that day by day, moment by moment, circumstance by circumstance never stops wooing us to Himself.

Oh, God, help me to not resist You but respond to Your loving wooing of my spirit to Yourself, I pray.

The only thing that can stop my constant growth in grace is resisting and rebelling against His voice – not listening and responding.

My dear friend, respond today, first, to His wooing you into His Presence. Set aside the maximum time possible to rest and wait quietly before Him, to listen to His voice and experience loving communion with Him.

I sincerely believe that more spiritual failure is traceable to inadequate time communing alone with God in loving intimacy than to all other causes combined.

So, please respond to His wooing you into His Presence today. Set aside ample time tomorrow morning. Get up as early as you must. Make this the most important part of your daily schedule.

Begin listening and letting Him persuade you of His love today.

-- Pastor Ron Marr

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