

BECAUSE GOD IS THE LIVING GOD, HE CAN HEAR; BECAUSE HE IS A LOVING GOD, HE WILL HEAR; BECAUSE HE IS OUR COVENANT GOD, HE HAS BOUND HIMSELF TO HEAR.

(C.H. SPURGEON)



f ALLEN MAN, NO MATTER HIS INCLINATION, HAS A TENDENCY TO GO TOO FAR. If to him God is personable, accessible, then he errs in making Him *too* human—too much the pal, the good ol' boy, the buddy who tags alongside like a doting puppy. If, on the other hand, to him God is utterly holy, untouchable, then he errs in making Him *too* distant and unreal—so unlike humans in every way that he remains unimaginable, and utterly inaccessible. Even under the best of conditions, man seems destined to apprehend only a bare subset of who and what God truly is.

For this reason we humans can become confused regarding the qualities of God that we more often associate with creatures of flesh, rather than creatures of spirit. We know from our grade school days that humans have five senses: sight, touch, hearing, taste, and smell. We can easily imagine that a supernatural God would have extra senses beyond our imagining—such as prescience—but seldom think of God possessing the same mundane senses given to man.

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness..."
(Genesis 1:26a)

But with the exception of sin (and the small difference that we are of flesh and He is of spirit), God and man are made of the same stuff. He has given us sight because *He* has sight; He has given us hearing because *He* hears. God, in His wisdom, has given us senses we can use to commune with Him, because they are the same ones He uses to commune with us.

Hearing Our Prayer

So Abraham rose early in the morning and took bread and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar, putting them on her shoulder, and gave her the boy, and sent her away. And she departed and wandered about in the wilderness of Beersheba.

When the water in the skin was used up, she left the boy under one of the bushes. Then she went and sat down opposite him, about a bowshot away, for she said, "Do not let me see the boy die." And she sat opposite him, and lifted up her voice and wept. God heard the lad crying; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What is the matter with you, Hagar? Do not fear, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is."

(Genesis 21:14-17)

Out of all of God's senses, perhaps it is His hearing that is most dear to us. For, since we now speak to Him only through forms of prayer, it is God's hearing that is most critical to our relationship with Him. When our hearts are heavy with sorrow, we beseech Him. When we are confused, and need vital direction, we plead with Him. When our hearts are filled with a joy that we are compelled to express, we sing to Him. All of this would be for naught, if God could not hear.

- The Israelites would still be slaves of the Egyptians.
- David's songs of praise would have evaporated in the ether.
- Nehemiah's habitual entreaties would have been issued in vain, and Jerusalem would not have been rebuilt.
- Manasseh would still be chained in Babylon.
- Lazarus would still be in his tomb.

God's sense of hearing is essential—from a human perspective—to our communion with Him. Without it our relationship

would be utterly one-sided. God could still read our hearts, and observe our actions, but He would not know those things we choose to say—or not to say—directly to Him.

Hearing it All

"In my distress I called upon the Lord,
Yes, I cried to my God;
And from His temple He heard my voice,
And my cry for help came into His ears."
(2 Samuel 22:7)

Until the day when we kneel before Him, in person, we may never know why

For the choir director; on a stringed instrument. A Psalm of David.

Hear my cry, O God;
Give heed to my prayer.
From the end of the earth I call to You
when my heart is faint;
Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.
For You have been a refuge for me,
A tower of strength against the enemy.
Let me dwell in Your tent forever;
Let me take refuge in the shelter of Your wings. Selah.
For You have heard my vows, O God;
You have given me the inheritance of those who fear Your name.
(Psalm 61:1-5)

it is important to an omnipotent, omniscient God to hear the spoken words of His people. But *His* word makes clear that it is. Though He knows the contents of the deepest recesses of our hearts, our minds, our loathings and yearnings, God still asks us to speak directly to Him with our mouth. He has His reasons—as mysterious as they are—to hear expressed by our own lips our supplication, our worship and praise, our confusion, our frustration, even our anger.

Beyond His ability to hear our spoken words, God also can "hear" our prayerful silence. Not only can He hear, but through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, God can interpret our unintelligible groanings.

Meanwhile, the moment we get tired in the waiting, God's Spirit is right alongside helping us along. If we don't know how or what to pray, it doesn't matter. He does our praying in and for us, making prayer out of our wordless sighs, our aching groans.

(Romans 8:26 *The Message*)

God listens to all of our life. Like a benevolent version of Orwell's omnipresent Big Brother, God hears what we hear; He hears what we say, and do not say; He hears those things we keep hidden in our heart; He hears those things we wish He didn't, and those things we think He hasn't. God, for our benefit, doesn't miss a thing. ■

*They who seek the throne of grace
Find that throne in every place:
If we live a life of prayer,
God is present everywhere.*

*In our sickness and our health,
In our want, or in our wealth,
If we look to God in prayer,
God is present everywhere.*

*When our earthly comforts fail
When the woes of life prevail,
'Tis the time for earnest prayer:
God is present everywhere.*

*Then, my soul, in every strait,
To thy Father come, and wait:
He will answer every prayer:
God is present everywhere.*

(Oliver Holden)