



The Sharon Star

How to Hear the Voice of God

By Andy Snoke

Can a man or a woman hear God? If so, how does He speak? How can we know that we are genuinely hearing from the Lord and not from our own hearts? The answer is “yes.” God does speak to His family. And there are ways in which we can learn to discern His voice, over our own thoughts. God does want to speak to His people. When the Lord does speak to us as individuals, it is most often in more than one way. The Lord has a way of “confirming” His Word and His ways through more than one avenue.

It is important that when we, as Christians, feel that God is “speaking” to us, we look for at least two or three confirmations that this is true. For, as fallen creatures, we can easily be misled by our own opinions, wants, desires, and needs. God’s voice is most often not thundering and overwhelming, but as God spoke to Elijah, it can be simply a whisper, with other confirmations. To begin with, we need to admit to ourselves, that the most spiritually experienced, well meaning saints, can get it wrong. We can fully believe that God has spoken to us, and be absolutely wrong. This is the story of Acts 15. It is through several avenues that God’s word is confirmed and that we become clear that God is speaking.

The intent of this article is to look at a few ways in which God speaks to us in this hour. If you believe that God is speaking to you, I encourage you as a reader to be sure that God is also speaking in more than one method that will be outlined below. Confirmation is always important. Don’t look for just one avenue; look for more than one.

God speaks through scripture.

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16-17). God speaks clearly, and directly through scripture. There are many things that a person need not even ask God about because they are already outlined in the Scriptures. For instance, a man may wake up very early in the morning and dread going into work if it is

an inconvenient and difficult environment. Should a man ask God if he should in fact go to work because it is difficult and inconvenient? I dare say that a prejudiced mind might think that he heard God say, “Just stay home and take it easy!” In reality, the Scriptures teach that if a man does not work, he should not eat. Therefore, there is no need to even ask God about whether it is important to work. Instead, in this situation, a man should give thanks to God for the job that provides the things he needs to support his family.

1. A man never has to ask God if he should love his wife. He is commanded to do so in Eph. 5:22.

2. A wife should never have to ask God about respecting her husband as she is already commanded to do so in Eph. 5:33.

3. A family need not ask God if they should pay a tithe to the Lord, as they are already commanded to do so in Malachi 3:8-11.

These are just a few examples of the will and voice of God speaking through the written Word of God.

God can speak to our heart and mind

God can and does speak directly to our heart and mind. At the same time, if we were to only rely on our “feeling” that it is God speaking to us, we could easily be misled. This is why it is important that when we feel that God is “speaking” to our hearts, we should also look for other avenues for discerning His will that confirms that. “And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is

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the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left” (Isaiah 30:21). “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:” (Hebrews 8:10). Learning to discern God’s voice speaking to our hearts is an acquired skill. It is something we can learn as we mature spiritually. I am sure that God has spoken to us on many occasions, but we did not have the maturity to discern that it was the Lord speaking. This comes with time and experience. “For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat 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” (Hebrews 5:13-14). “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers” (John 10:1-5).

The Lord called young Samuel three times before he recognised that it was the Lord speaking. “And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep; That the Lord called Samuel: and he answered, Here am I. And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down. And the Lord called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again. Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed unto him. And the Lord called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child. Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place. And the Lord came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth” (1 Samuel 3:3-10).

Let us all pray that the Lord will give us a greater sensitivity to hear and discern His voice.

We can hear the voice of the Lord through the prophecies that went before us as individuals.

In this last revival, which is but a stair step towards the finished work of God in the Church, the Lord in an unusual way has blessed the truth of gifts and ministries to the individual, which are given through prophecy and the laying on of the hands of the presbytery (group of elders). Through the years, we can look back at the

multitude of prophecies given over individuals and see that these have been accurate in a miraculous way. These prophecies given over the individuals, as God indicated, have proven to be absolutely astonishingly, amazingly, and miraculously accurate. What we have experienced through the laying on of hands, and what we can continue to experience on a regular basis, cannot be summed up by any word short of “a miracle.”

No man can know the heart of man, yet through the laying on of hands by the presbytery (which for safety is always more than one person), truths have been revealed, gifts and power endued, and with much detail, a person’s ministry has been revealed. “Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:19-21). “This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare;” (1 Timothy 1:18-19).

“Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery (which means a group of elders). “Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all” (1 Timothy 4:14-15).

If you have had the privilege of being prayed over and set in your work for the Lord, it is good to review what the Lord said from time to time. God will use these prophecies to confirm His Word. If you have not been prayed over, then please seek the Lord for His timing and opportunity.

God speaks through godly counsel.

“Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety” (Proverbs 11:14). “For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war: and in multitude of counsellors there is safety” (Proverbs 24:6). “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise” (Proverbs 12:15). “Every purpose is established by counsel: and with good advice make war” (Proverbs 20:18). “He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered” (Proverbs 28:26).

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

God has a way of confirming His voice through the counsel of the godly. Often, when we have questions regarding following the will of God, it is good to talk to our local elders, to get a confirmation. If we “feel” that we have “heard from God,” and are afraid to talk to those over us such as our elders because we are concerned the answer won’t be what we like, then something is wrong. Acts 15 is an account of how the new Jewish elders were convinced that the Gentiles must follow the physical requirements given by Moses in order to be saved. There was much disagreement among all; but after they contacted the apostles, and had a long discussion, the Lord gave a clear answer through godly counsel.

When in doubt-- ask!

God speaks through confirmation.

“But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established” (Matthew 18:16).

After the great debate in Acts 15, a debate that could have split the Church before it had even had time to become established, by godly counsel and then confirmation, God gave clarity.

The confirmation was so great, the following letters were written and sent:

“Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren: And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia: Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment: It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul” (Acts 15:22-25). “For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things;” (Acts 15:28).

God speaks through circumstances and timing.

“After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth; and found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome;) and came unto them, and because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers” (Acts 18:1-3). This relationship between Paul, Aquila, and Priscilla, which happened as a result of circumstances, became one of the most important strategic partnerships in the book of Acts.

God speaks through His peace.

When a person has followed the voice of God, and has allowed His will to be confirmed by a number of methods outlined above (more than one), then the Lord allows a “peace” to wash over our souls with the great comfort of knowing we are in His will.

“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful” (Colossians 3:15). “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27).

Encouragement from the Psalms

By David Cotcher

We can find a lot of encouragement in the Psalms as we do throughout the Scriptures. The Psalmist, David, had times when he was discouraged, or fearful, or feeling overwhelmed, and we can see in the Psalms how he found encouragement. We can have the same feelings at times, and the Psalms are a wonderful source of encouragement.

David cried unto the Lord in prayer at a time when he was feeling overwhelmed. “Hear my cry, O God; attend unto my prayer. From the end of the earth will I cry unto Thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For Thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy. I will abide in Thy tabernacle for ever: I will trust in the covert of Thy wings” (Psalm 61:1 - 4). David prayed that God would lead him to that stability in the solid rock, and know the calm assurance of His protection. He was reminded that God has been a shelter, and a strong tower to protect him the enemy. When David was feeling overwhelmed, he reminded himself to fully put his trust in God and abide under His covering. As David does in many of the Psalms, he first confesses his own weakness and then declares His trust in God’s protection and strength.

Many times David was under attack from his enemies, and he learned to trust in God’s protection. This is expressed in Psalm 91 in wonderful promises that we can claim for ourselves. “He that dwelleth in the secret

place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust. Surely He shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings shalt thou trust: His truth shall be thy shield and buckler” (Psalm 91: 1 - 4). Praise God! We can dwell in the secret place of the Most High, and fully trust Him under His covering.

David asked his own soul, “Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance” (Psalm 42:5). David was feeling unrest or turmoil in his soul, and later in the psalm he repeats this again “Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God” (v11). He asked himself, “Why are you feeling down and in turmoil?” He reminded himself to put his hope in God, and to keep praising Him for His help and strength. Again, he repeats this in the next Psalm, as well, (Psalm 43:5) to really get the message into his heart and soul. We are the same as David, and we often need to be reminded again to really receive the truth deep in our hearts. David encouraged himself, and wrote this in the Psalms as a testimony to encourage others. If we feel disquieted or experience unrest in our souls, let us say as

David did, “I am still going to keep praising the Lord, and putting my hope and trust in Him, for He is my help and my strength.” Then, as we testify this to others, we can be an encouragement to them as well. Praise God!

David admitted that he had fear at times. “What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee. In God I will praise His word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me” (Psalm 56: 3 - 4). We know the accounts from the Bible of how David as a young boy protected the sheep from the wild animals. He learned to put his trust in God, and he came against Goliath in the name of the Lord. It does not seem like he would have fear, but David was honest and admitted that at times he did. If fear started to come, he immediately reminded himself of his trust in God. He said, “I will keep praising God and putting my trust in Him,” and as he did this he declared, “I will not fear.” Again later in this Psalm David says, “In God will I praise His word: in the LORD will I praise His word. In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me. Thy vows are upon me, O God: I will render praises unto Thee. For Thou hast delivered my soul from death: wilt not Thou deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?” (verses 10 -13). Then, in Psalm 27 David writes, “The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid” (Psalm 27:1)? If fear comes, we can praise God for He is the strength of our life. We can remind ourselves of how God had protected us in the past, and how others have testified of God’s protection, and praise Him for it. We have the Psalms for our example and encouragement. We can say, “I will not fear for I have put my trust in God.”

Several of the Psalms were written while Saul was pursuing David and trying to kill him. The heading for Psalm 57 says it was written while he was hiding in a cave from Saul, “To the chief Musician, Altaschith, Michtam of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave.” He begins the Psalm by calling on God’s mercy, and declares his trust in God’s protection, “Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in Thee: yea, in the shadow of Thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast” (Psalm 57:1). Then as he is encouraged he begins to praise the Lord, “Be Thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let Thy

glory be above all the earth” (v5). He becomes firm in his confidence in God, and builds up in praise with his singing and musical instruments, “My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise. Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early. I will praise Thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto Thee among the nations. For Thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and Thy truth unto the clouds. Be Thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: let Thy glory be above all the earth” (verses 7 - 11). I can picture David hiding in the cave, singing praise unto the Lord, “Be Thou exalted O God” as he declared his trust in God.

David found encouragement in singing praises and playing his musical instruments. We would refer to David as having gifts and ministry in music, and he was able to use this at a time when he needed encouragement. When he was hiding from Saul, as we read in Psalms 57, he sang praises to God and played his psaltery and harp. I am sure he not only encouraged himself but also those who were with him. We appreciate those who have this gift in music and who can encourage us when we need it. We may not have that gift in music as David did but at a time when we feel under attack from the enemy and need encouragement, the Lord can put a song in our hearts, and we can declare our praise to God and our trust in Him. Also, if we will look at our own gifts and ministries, we will see that the Lord has made provision that if we will be faithful to operate what the Lord has provided, we can receive encouragement in the time of need and also be a blessing to others.

There are many examples in the Psalms of David receiving encouragement in the times when he had fear or anxiety, or was feeling overwhelmed. There were times he was under attack from his enemies and in danger. He reminded himself of his trust in God and how God had been his help and protection in the past. David praised the Lord and declared his trust and confidence in God through his songs. We can see these examples in the Psalms of how he received encouragement, and he wrote them as a testimony to encourage others. We can receive that same encouragement in our times of need by remembering that God is our strength and our protection, and continuing to praise Him. As we do this, we will also be an encouragement to others.

Praise God!

Everlasting Life

By P.J. Mathew

Life is the quintessential component of the creation of God. Animals, plants, fish and even inanimate objects such as rocks, soil and other creations of God have been given life to exist. Man who is the crown of all creations is also bestowed with life, not only to exist, but to live into eternity in the glorious presence of God. God purposed eternal life to be everlasting or permanent in scope. Everything in God’s creation bears the mark of His life.

It is important to bear in mind that the life of mankind is the handiwork of God. One significant aspect to note here is that Adam was formed in the hands of God unlike other creations. The formation of man in the very image of God was done with great accuracy and exactness. “The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being” (Gen. 2: 7 NIV).

When God formed Adam from the dust of the ground he was only a lifeless piece of clay, but when God breathed life into his nostrils, he became a living being. He was transformed into the very image of God (Gen.1:27). It was the breath of God that made Adam a living being. The body was from the earth, but the breath of life in it came from above.

Subsequently, Eve was made from the rib of Adam (Gen. 2: 22). Adam was put in charge of the Garden of Eden to take care of it. Both Adam and Eve had intimate fellowship with God before the sin of disobedience occurred. However, when Adam disobeyed the command of God by eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he (Adam) and Eve were driven out of the Garden of Eden. Consequently, they (Adam and Eve) lost the glorious life and fellowship they had with God. Spiritual death and the gradual process of physical death replaced the God-breathed life they enjoyed in the garden. Nonetheless, in the fullness of time, Jesus, the Son of God, restored that lost life of God to everyone who believes in Him. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3: 16 NIV). It is essential to note that in the plan of God, man is never abandoned, even when he is stubborn with God. When Adam and Eve were driven out of the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3: 23), the love of God did not diminish but continued with them and followed throughout the history of mankind. Whenever men are repentant of their evil ways, God pours out His compassion on them. John, the apostle of love, makes it quite clear that although life with God was lost in the beginning of the creation, God restored that lost life through his Son Jesus Christ. That life which was breathed into Adam is still abiding in us through Jesus Christ. "The first Adam became a living being, the last Adam (Christ) a life-giving Spirit" (I Cor. 15:45 NIV). The last Adam in us continues to manifest the divine life in our mortal bodies. It is a very powerful thought to comprehend that we breathe and live the very life of God. "The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life" (Job 33: 4 NIV). "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive" (I Cor. 15: 22 NIV).

Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this" (John 11: 25 & 26 NIV)? This is a paradoxical statement since it defies death and places life over death. It is significant to note that the back-drop of this event is a house in mourning over the death of Martha's and Mary's only brother called Lazarus. In the Scriptures, we read that Jesus, in his humanity, wept for the death of Lazarus but in His divinity commands Lazarus to come out of the grave, and he (Lazarus) rose out of the grave (John 11: 43). When Lazarus emerged from the grave, he was no longer sick or feeble but alive, transformed with a new breath of life from God. That power of life of the Son of God changed Lazarus into a new man. Lazarus was dead for four days and there was a bad odor in the area (John 11: 39 NIV). People, including Martha and

Mary, were skeptical of the miracle of this new life, but Jesus who was the very Resurrection and Life called out for life, in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" in a place where there was no life (the tomb). At the command of the life-giving Spirit, the dead man obeyed and walked out of the sepulcher. If Jesus had uttered, "Ye come out!" it would have been an incredible day of resurrection of all the dead ones in that particular time and place. I believe that from that point of time on, the life of Lazarus was not the same. One cannot fathom that glow of heavenly life in him once he was drawn away from the sting of death to experience the new life of God. In John's gospel we read, "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself: so he has granted the Son to have life in himself" (John 5: 24-26 NIV).

Eternal life can exist within us now. It is a here-and-now possession of the believer and not some distant future possibility because we have crossed over from death into the life of the son of God. We no longer live in the realm of death but in the realm of life. An inference is made here not only to the future resurrection but also to the fact that Christ gives that quality of resurrected life even now. It is to be understood from the scriptures above that those who are spiritually dead but who hear him will receive life from him as well. Again, the life of the Son is no different from that of the Father. John makes it clear to us that the same life of God appeared in Jesus, and he saw it and was witness to it. "For it was life which appeared before us: we saw it, we are eye-witnesses of it, and are now writing to you about it. It was the very life of all ages, the life that has always existed with the Father, which actually became visible in person to us. We repeat, we really saw and heard what we are now writing about. We want you to be with us in this - in this fellowship with the Father, and Jesus Christ his Son. We write to tell you about it, so that our joy may be complete" (I John 1: 2-4 J.B. Phillips). "Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20: 31 NIV). John wants his readers to know that Jesus was not a spiritual phantom, as Gnosticism preached, but the Son of God who had the very life of God within His physical body. He was the very temple of God while he was on the earth. Through Him we may receive that life when we believe in Him. Faith and life make a strong connection here through Apostle John's writing. We have to believe that we have the life of God through Jesus Christ.

Gnosticism: According to Gnosticism, "Christ as absolute spiritual good could not unite with matter (material world). Either man Jesus was a phantom with the seeming appearance of a material body or Christ came upon the human body of Jesus only for a short time - between baptism of the man Jesus and the beginning of his suffer-

ing on the cross.” (Earle E. Cairns, *Christianity Through the Centuries*, p.97) “Gnosticism was at its peak in 150 A.D. and gained momentum in the seventh-century Paulicans, the eleventh - century Bulgarian Bogomils, and later Albigenses in southern France.” (Adapted from *Christianity Through the Centuries*, Earle E. Cairns, pp. 96-98).

We want to encourage the readers that there is a divine life accessible even here and now. It is a new life through Christ Jesus which is eternal and indestructible at the hands of death, sin and sickness. Apostle Paul mentions that death has been swallowed up in victory. “Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will be changed – in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable: and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory” (I Cor. 15: 51:54 NIV). Apostle Paul emphatically proclaims that death has been defeated in its fight against life. Life emerges victorious in the end. It is through our faith in the life - giving Spirit that we walk into the very presence of God unfettered by the sting of death. “Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away” (Gen. 5:24 NIV). That will be a glorious day when the sons of God will find that liberty in the Spirit to challenge mortality with immortality, perishable with imperishable and death with life. “That the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God” (Romans 8: 21 NIV).

Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman at the well saying “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 4:13-14 NIV). Eternal life is not confined in time. It is an everlasting or never ending quality of life. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the life” (John 14: 6 NIV). Jesus came into the world “that we may have life and have it to the full” (John 10: 10 NIV). Here, Jesus is portrayed as the giver of life in its fullness. The context of this scripture is about the good Shepherd, who is Jesus, willing to give his life to the fullest for the well-being of the sheep (believers). Undoubtedly, John talks about that life which is eternal in nature and in its completeness. In other words, there is no scarcity in that life which is offered by the Shepherd of all shepherds to His sheep. He gives eternal life to His sheep because they listen to His voice. “In him was life, and that life was the light of men” (John 1: 4 NIV). Life began in Him and we became partakers of that Life of God. It is the will of the Father who sent Jesus that everyone who sees Him and believes in Him should have life (John 6: 40). Jesus is the giver of life because the Father has set his own seal of approval upon him (John 6: 27). He gives life to as many as God has given him (John 17: 2). He gave His life for us that we might have His life in us. “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by the faith in the son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gala-

tians 2: 20 NIV). Once you are crucified with Christ, you no longer live for this world. Each day of life is based on faith in Jesus. You have become a new person because the old nature of man in you has perished, and now the resurrected life of Christ is in you. It is a true metamorphosis in a person when he/she experiences the shedding of all the carnal nature and becomes clothed in Christ Jesus.

“If a man is in Christ he becomes a new person altogether- the past is finished and gone, everything has become fresh and new” (2 Cor. 5:17 J.B. Phillips). There is a legend, although not supported in scientific fact, that illustrates in an allegorical way what can happen spiritually in the life of a believer. It is believed that an eagle lives up to the age of about 70 years. The legend goes that at the age of 40, it loses all its vigor, vitality, and strength. It cannot hunt any more because its beak has grown very crooked and old. At that point this king of the birds has only two options; either to die or to fly away to a high mountain where it should go through an excruciating process of “dying” in order to be “reborn.” In the process, it plucks out every talon(claw) on its feet. Then it plucks out every feather from its body since it has grown very heavy over the years and waits for the new ones to grow. It knocks its crooked beak on the rock and plucks it out. It takes about 150 days for the whole process to culminate. The beak, talons and the feathers grow back in that time. Then it is “reborn” so to speak and regains all its life and vitality after this painful journey. It soars again into the limitless sky and enters a new phase of life and will live for another 30 years. The eagle regains its youth and will not be weary or faint any more because of the new life that it has received during the self-exiled period of time. This new life that we experience in Christ changes us and enables us to put behind us the failures and weaknesses of the past, because Jesus has completely transformed us. We are on a new plane in our spiritual journey. As Christians we are constantly on a pilgrimage. During this sojourn we are referred to as “Hagios” which means holy, different or separate, etc. It simply means that we, as believers, must be examples, different or separate in this world. The standards of a Christian must not be compromised. They must be above the norms of the world.

It was the strong conviction of Paul that it was no longer him (Paul) that lived but Christ that lived in him. The life of Christ flowed in him which was obviously the life of the resurrected Christ. All those who are washed by the blood of the Lamb are the partakers of this never-dying life. “And if the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies, through his Spirit who lives in you” (Romans 8:11 NIV). Apostle Paul speaks of a life dominated by the Spirit of God. Such a life could not be contained by the grave. The Spirit of God raised Jesus, and the same Spirit is being given to us. It is an experience of a Spirit-filled life. Such a person has no mind of his own; Christ is his mind. He or she is Spirit-controlled, Christ-controlled and God-focused. We have numerous examples in the Bible of how when the Spirit of God moved upon the dead, life flowed on to the lifeless beings. Consequently, we see the transcended experience

in the person. In Ezekiel 37, we read about “the valley of dead bones.” When the prophet Ezekiel prophesied over the bones the Spirit of God came upon the dead bones and they became living bodies and stood upright, a vast army. Dead bones are our mortal bodies which will be revived when the Spirit of God moves in us. The Church has to wake up from its stupor and feel the Spirit of God flowing from all four directions. In Revelation, “I know what you have done, that you have a reputation for being alive, but that in fact you are dead. Now wake up! Strengthen what you still have before it dies! For I have not found any of your deeds complete in the sight of God. Remember then what you were given and what you were taught. Hold to those things and repent. If you refuse to wake up, then I will come to you like a thief, and you will have no idea of the hour of my coming” (Rev. 3: 2-3 J.B. Phillips). “The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace” (Rom. 8: 06 NIV). Here we have an example of two sets of minds; one set on carnality and another on the Spirit. The one who is obedient to the Spirit will inherit life and peace. The emphasis here is on the life that flows from the Spirit of God. When we submit to the flow or to the moving of the Spirit, we experience a great vitality in our walk with God. A carnal man (Christian?) can also follow God, but he cannot sense the ever-flowing Spirit in his own life. Among the twelve disciples, Judas Iscariot did not relate to the newness of the Spirit of God even though he had witnessed miracles, healings and heard the sermons of Jesus. In order to see the Spirit in operation, a person must drink from that living water that Jesus promised to the Samaritan woman. She (John 4) did not understand the meaning of the living water because of her deep conviction in the Samaritan way of worship. It is only after she confessed her sins that the Spirit of God started moving in her. She acknowledged her past wrongdoings and recognized Jesus as the “Messiah.” Subsequently, she was able to testify who Jesus was, and many Samaritans became believers in Christ (John 4: 39).

His life is flowing in our natural bodies. His life is eternal. The word for eternal is “aionios.” Here eternal means far more than simply lasting forever. God alone possesses and inhabits eternity. Eternal life is therefore purely the life of God Himself. However, as children of God, we are given a share in the very life of God. The life of God in us knows no fear, bitterness or hatred. It is a life with the power of God, liberated from fears and victorious over all the circumstances of life. It is also a life of the holiness of God. In Ezekiel 47, we read about a river that flowed from the threshold of the temple. Wherever that river flowed and to whatever it touched, it gave life; and the creatures began to move because of the life-giving power of the river of God. The trees on the banks of the river gave fruit every month of the year, and the leaves of the trees were used for healing the sick. In Psalm 1, we read about the righteous people who are like the trees planted by the rivers of water. They bear fruit in due season and their leaves will not wither. Whatever, they do will prosper. Rivers of water will give life to the trees that are grown there. Those trees know the vitality of life that is being absorbed through the roots, then to the stalk, and finally

to the branches. Even when there is a storm, drought or any other natural disaster, the trees that are planted by the rivers of water have nothing to fear because their roots are connected to the river of life. So also children of God who are in the midst of persecutions, trials or temptations, do not have to worry because the breath of life breathed into them is Jesus Himself who abides in them.

“I tell you truly that unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains a single grain of wheat; but if it dies, it brings a good harvest” (John 12: 24 J.B. Phillips). Jesus was the grain of wheat that fell to the earth only to rise again on the third day. It means that the life of the seed is not released in its physical existence but in its death. When it (seed) dies, it sprouts and becomes a plant, and then it grows to be a vine or a small fruit tree. Finally it bears fruit. A tiny seed produces many seeds only when it gives away its life. John makes a very poignant statement saying that life comes by way of death. The grain of wheat is ineffective and unfruitful as long as it is preserved and kept in safety and security. Only when the seed is thrown into the cold ground and buried there can it ultimately bear fruit. The church became stronger by the death of martyrs. To quote a famous phrase “The blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church.” Jesus gave His life on the cross so that He could share his eternal life with us. While Jesus lived on earth as God's temple, He was seen only at one place at a time, but since His resurrection, His presence is everywhere through the Holy Spirit and not limited to one place at a time. Because He shared His life with us, that life is dwelling in us. He lives in us and we live in Him. Jesus said, “Abide in me and I in you” (John 15: 4a KJV). In John 15:1-17, there is an illustration of Jesus being the Vine and his chosen ones as the branches. Our heavenly Father is the divine Husbandman that cares and dresses this Vine. Each branch is closely connected to the Vine. Each branch will bear fruit when it abides in the Vine. There is life in the Vine, and that life flows into all the branches. The life of Christ is eternal, and it is an uncreated life. Though they nailed Him to the cross and buried Him in a tomb, yet, this uncreated life could not be held by the chains of death. When you believe in Christ, you become a branch of the Vine, and then the resurrection life flows from Christ to you. The life of the Vine is not only in the branches but also in the fruit. All who partake of the fruit also partake of the life that is in the Vine. “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit - fruit that will last” (John 15:16-17 NIV).

When we partake of the communion, we partake of Christ's life. Jesus said “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him” (John 6: 56, NIV). Apostle Paul wrote, “Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ ” (I Cor. 10: 16-17 NIV)? Here, a believer can experience the tremendous flow of the life of Christ that is being imparted to the partaker through the holy communion. When we partake of the communion, we truly believe that we participate in the blood and body of Christ in a mystical manner because our natural

understanding cannot fathom the flow of His life into our mortal bodies. Jesus said, "I am the bread of life" (John 6: 48 NIV). It was a difficult concept for the disciples to understand because they knew about the manna which their forefathers ate during their sojourn in the wilderness. A person claiming that He was the bread of life was a very hard thing to comprehend for the Jews. Jesus went on saying that those who ate manna in the desert died but those who would eat this bread would never die. The bread Jesus offered was his own body or flesh for the life of the world. Manna gave the people their daily sustenance, but Jesus, the bread of life, gives us eternal life. When Jesus said, "Eat my flesh and drink my blood," He was inviting us to not only partake of the sacrament of the communion but also to make Him our central figure, to have a Christ-filled or Christ-shared life. "The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life" (John 6: 63 NIV).

"And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life" (I John 5: 11-12 NIV). John, the apostle, writes to us that life is in Him (Jesus) and whoever believes in the Son has the same life which is eternal, indeed. The faith in the Son of God gives us the eternal life. It is not for the longevity of the life span, but it is to know the power of participating or partaking of divine life while we are on earth. That life in the Son brought Lazarus back to life. It is the same life that made the daughter of Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, come back to life (Mark 5: 42). Again, the same life in the Son worked in Paul, the Apostle, when he said, "We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in the body. For, we are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body. So then, death is at work in us but life is at work in you" (2 Cor. 4: 10-12 NIV). Paul speaks about himself experiencing death so that we might experience life. Many times Paul had to pass through the valley of death in order to bring the gospel of eternal life to the Gentile world. He was shipwrecked, starved and beaten. He fought against the animals, was hated by Jews, and heavily persecuted for Christ's sake. "Therefore, we do not lose heart. Though outwardly, we are wasting away, yet

inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" (2 Corinthians, 4:16-18, NIV). Paul mentions here about an eternal glory that surpasses every obstacle in our walk with God. He had seen the unseen, trudged the unexplored terrain and heard the inaudible voice of eternal life.

In conclusion, we know that as believers, we have an eternal hope in Him in order to reign with Him. He is the hope of glory who was revealed to us, and He lives in us. We are being changed from glory to glory until we become the very image of Jesus Christ. The eternal life that is within us is the divine life which we have received through Christ. It is received not by our own merit but by the mercy of God. The Spirit of God is moving in our midst even now to make us aware of the flow of eternal life in these earthen vessels which are our physical bodies. Amen.

CALLED HOME

Gladys Aarrestad
Park Valley, SK
April 29, 2015



*For a listing of dates and
contact information visit
www.globalmissionsinc.org*

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