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DIVINE MADNESS

The question that continually bothers me is: Why am I not able to hear from God directly? Why is my channel always clogged? I want to hear from God, but I continue to stumble through life, believing that God has a perfect plan for me to fulfill, yet never quite getting there. At times I sense there is a great wall between me and the perfect will of God. Like Paul, the things I want to do, I don't do. The things I don't want to do, I am constantly doing. So I keep asking, is it possible to really hear the voice of God? And if so, is it possible to follow His direction?

It's easy for me to rationalize this and say, "The real problem in my life is my wife. If Jackie would hear clearly from God, then everything else would fall into place." But I know that is not the case. That's a cop-out. As much as I want her to hear from God, my real problem is me.

Every time I start down some path, I invariably come to a fork in the road. It's at these forks of decision where I have my problems. I start, then I stop. I'm constantly backing up and starting over again, so that far more time is spent regrouping in confusion than marching forward in victory.

Now, after a number of years of going and coming, I have determined that the secret to hearing the voice of God is contained in Romans 8:5-6. Here Paul says:

Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.

A quick caution here. The word "flesh" in the Bible does not refer to your problem with overweight or lust. Those kinds of things only *result* from walking according to the flesh. But Paul is talking about a kingdom in which we live, a materialistic realm which puts wax in our ears and prevents us from hearing the voice of God, because, in that kingdom, we rule.

The Bible recognizes another kind of kingdom. A kingdom of the Spirit. In this kingdom God rules, and all who enter become His servants. They hear His voice and walk in His abundance.

Everybody who rules in his own kingdom is doomed to die. In fact, Jesus says they are dead already.

Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son (John 3:18).

I vividly remember the afternoon a pretty, fifteen-year-old girl came into my study. Her world had fallen apart. She was pregnant. Rejected by her parents, she had taken the jagged edge of a Band-Aid can and had attempted suicide by lacerating the arteries in her wrist. Happily she was unsuccessful, but it was indicative of her hopelessness. I talked to her, but I don't think she heard anything. She left, telling me that sooner or later she would again attempt suicide. She gave me a poem she had written. In four lines it collected the thoughts of a million lonely kids. It said:

These are the ones on whose tombs they'll inscribe:

Died at fifteen, buried at seventy-five.
Out of the night we breathe a sigh
For those who are dead, but cannot die.

To live in the dimension of the Spirit is life and peace. To live in our own kingdoms is death.

Somewhere in this life, perhaps only in isolated areas, there are people who walk through this world exuding life and peace. They are surrounded by the problems of old age, poverty, sickness, grief, pain, hatred, and loneliness. Yet their spirit is a spirit of life and peace. No matter what comes at them, no matter what kind of catastrophe falls on their lives, inside they are filled with life and peace. They are like the rose petals which, when crushed, give forth beautiful perfume. Rare. Seldom seen. But they do exist.

God wants to bring us to that place. Yet we are worldlings. We are a people of reason and logic. We judge success by outward standards. We make our decisions on the basis of verifiable data: Is this course of action going to cost us money? Is it going to cost us reputation? Is it going to cost us popularity? As a result of our logical answers to these questions, we turn either right or left at the forks of our roads.

Last Christmas I had a long talk with our teenage son who was home from college for the holidays. Like many college students, he was always short of money. So, as fathers often do with children who handle money with reckless abandon, I called him aside for a conference. We sat on the side of the bed in an upstairs bedroom and our conversation went something like this:

“Bruce, you are spending too much money out there at school.”

“But, dad, what’s money for? Isn’t it to spend?”

“Well, yes, son. That’s the purpose of money. But you also need to save some for tomorrow.”

“Is that what you’re doing with the money you make?”

“Yes, we spend only as much as we need. The rest we save for the day when we won’t have any earning power.”

He just sat there looking at me. And the more he looked the more uncomfortable I became. I had a feeling he had been listening to my sermons on the joy of giving – and taking them literally. I slowly began to realize that I was saying to him, “Son, the time may come when God won’t provide for you, and you’ll have to provide for yourself. The *wise* man is one who stashes money away to meet this kind of emergency.” Yet even as I spoke, I realized I was giving him the wisdom of this world, rather than the word of God.

We talked long that afternoon, and I received as much insight into God’s plan for money as he did. Perhaps even more, as I realized how much I was depending on myself rather than God.

Plato, the Greek philosopher and a disciple of Socrates, said that there are three valid sources of knowledge. The first source of knowledge, according to Plato, is the five senses. We share these with the animals. We taste, hear, see, feel, and smell.

The second source of knowledge, according to Plato, is reason. Reason is the thing that sets us above all the other creatures. It enables us to reach a logical conclusion. It is this process that enables me to sit down and deduce, “Okay, I’m going to have fifteen more productive years during which I shall earn money. After that, my earning power will be greatly diminished.” Therefore, on the basis of this premise I should begin to lay aside money for the time when the productive years will be over. Then I will not have to live off my children, who might one day come to me and say, “Daddy, you are spending too much money. You’re going to have to cut down.” There’s nothing wrong with this kind of reasoning, but it can take you only a limited distance.

That’s why Plato saw a third concept of knowledge. He called it “divine madness,” referring to the entire world of spiritual communication. Here a man receives knowledge in a way which is neither through the senses nor through the mind. It comes from the Source of Power to our spirit. Some might call it *intuition*, others, *inspiration*.

Later, Aristotle, who was Plato’s disciple, eliminated this third, or supernatural, source. He thought the entire intuitive faculty was invalid. Unfortunately, much of what we experience in the Western world is based on Aristotle’s philosophy. We say if knowledge does not come

through our senses or our reason, it is invalid. If we can't taste it, feel it, smell it, or if we can't deduce it, it is not real. Thus have we lost that vital balance which brings maturity to decisions based on knowledge received through the senses or by reason. In the Eastern and primitive cultures, references to the spiritual world abound. Dreams, visions, supernatural communication, talk of spiritual things – are common. Walk through the marketplace in Bangkok, Katmandu, or Manila, and everyone is talking about communication with the spiritual world. But for a man to use such language on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, or in a board meeting at General Electric, would be sheer madness. Here in the West we rule out all talk of God giving us divine knowledge as poppycock. Oh, we believe in God, but we are unwilling to believe He can, or will, communicate to us through any means other than the senses and reason.

I do not believe God intends to destroy our reasoning power. In fact, I believe He often uses it to communicate His purpose. In Isaiah 30, the prophet indicates that if a man is walking with God, he will basically walk by listening to his reason and following the five senses. However, if he steps off the path, or makes a wrong turn at the fork of the road, then he can expect to hear a gentle voice from within giving correction.

Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you saying, "This is the way; walk in it" (Isaiah 30:21).

Now, we, in our Western idiom, call that "conscience." We would be much more accurate if we called it the "voice of God." But our "reason" forbids that. We know that if we stand in the marketplace and say, "God told me...," we'll be laughed at. Therefore we opt for a cultural cop-out. Instead of saying, "No, I shall not do that because God forbids me," we grin and say, "My conscience would bother me."

I was amazed, during a visit to Thailand last year, to hear the wife of a high government official say at a luncheon, "The spirits commanded me to do a certain thing." I looked around at the military and political leaders who were present and saw they were all nodding their heads. They understood. But here in America we are unwilling to acknowledge the presence of God – or evil spirits. Why? Because we are *reasonable* people.

Reason causes us to say we should not act until we have full understanding. Until all the facts are in. But the Bible says that if we dwell in the secret place of the Most High (that is, if we are living in the kingdom of God), we shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty (Psalm 91:1). In other words, the closer we get to God, the more we walk by faith and not by sight.

The more you walk by faith and not by sight, the less you need to understand Him. Something else begins to happen. He takes over and directs your walk, your life, by divine intuition.

In Matthew 14 we read the story of Jesus walking on the water. When Simon Peter, the big fisherman, saw Jesus out there, he must have realized it was illogical. Peter had been raised on the water. He knew it was unreasonable for a man to walk on the surface. But when Jesus beckoned to Peter and said, "Come!" Peter forgot about reason. In a moment of spiritual exuberance, he threw his legs over the side of the boat and started out on the water himself – walking toward Jesus. It was not until his reasoning faculty began to work again that he sank. He had moved from faith to sight, only to discover that while Aristotle had grasped a portion of the truth, he had missed the better part.

Some of you have been there before. You started out in faith, but the closer you got to God, the darker things became. Then you backed off, reaching for the safety of the boat. "Boy, have I done a foolish thing," you think, as you head back to "safety." But had you gone on, you would have come into the actual presence of the Lord Himself.

In my little studio on the second floor of my house, I have an electric typewriter. If I were to come in one morning and flip the switch and not hear the familiar whirr, I would immediately look to see if my machine were plugged in. I wouldn't sit in my chair in front of the keyboard and wail, "Oh, electricity, please come into my typewriter and make it work." Nor would I bow my head in prayer and plead, "God,

in the name of Jesus, fill my typewriter with power.” No, I would simply plug the cord into the socket, which is the outlet for power, which in turn is connected with the source of power, and wait for the machine to begin to hum.

The entire universe is filled with the healing power of God. But in order to be healed, one has to come in contact with that power. God is the source of the power and the Holy Spirit is the outlet. Aristotle may call it invalid, and Plato may refer to it as “divine madness,” but the Bible calls it the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Without it we are powerless, ignorant, and left to our own devices.

God has made a world that is run by law – His laws. There are laws of nature, gravity, physics, chemistry, sound, and light. But there is another law – the law of love and grace – which supersedes all other laws. When God invokes this law, that is, when He intervenes in the affairs of men personally, we call it a miracle. But to God, such dealings are just as “natural” as an apple falling downward when it drops from a tree. Reason may say man cannot walk on water. But faith allows us to do the impossible.

Dr. Alexis Carrel, physician and scientist, declared that he had seen skin cancer disappear at the command of faith. That is not breaking the laws of nature. It is the superimposition of a higher law. If we were to investigate such healings we would always find that somewhere, someone along the line had reached down and plugged themselves into the available power – the power of the Holy Spirit who transcends all man’s reason and senses.

There are millions of Christians who have died of disease whom God longed to heal. Countless others live on in misery and defeat because they are unwilling to pay the price of inner healing. God has provided, in the person of His Holy Spirit, the healing agent. All we have to do is reach out and touch Him.

When we are under the shadow of the Almighty, we are not walking by sight, but by faith. Yet it is here, in the shadowy place, that He covers us with His wings and gives His angels charge over us, to keep us in all our ways. It is here we find provision, protection, and joy – and healing. It cannot be reasoned out. It can only be accepted. By faith.