

Are You Listening?

By: David Burruss

One of the foundational truths of the Christian faith is this: obedience to God begins with listening to His Word. Without hearing, understanding, and internalizing His message, true obedience is impossible. The Apostle Paul reminds us in Romans 10:17, “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” This verse highlights the vital connection between listening and faith, and by extension, obedience.

Throughout Scripture, we see God calling His people to listen. In Deuteronomy 6:4-5, it begins with the words, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.” This command to “hear” isn’t just about physical listening, it’s about paying attention with the intent to understand and respond. God’s Word is not a passive message; it’s active and living, meant to transform the hearts of those who truly listen.

When we fail to listen, we miss the starting point of obedience. How can we follow God’s commands if we haven’t taken the time to hear and understand them? Obedience flows from a heart that has been shaped by the Word of God. Listening is the soil in which the seeds of faith and action are planted.

Paul’s statement in Romans 10:17 highlights a crucial truth: faith doesn’t appear out of thin air. It begins when we hear the Word of God. This “hearing” goes beyond the physical act of listening, it involves actively receiving and meditating on God’s truth.

Consider the parable of the sower in Matthew 13:3-9. The seed represents the Word of God, and the various types of soil represent the condition of the listener’s heart. Only the good soil, those who hear the Word, understand it, and allow it to take root, produces a fruitful harvest. Faith is born when we not only hear God’s Word but let it take root in our hearts.

James gives us a practical warning about the relationship between listening and obedience: “Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” (James 1:22). Listening to God’s Word is not the end goal; it’s the first step. True listening leads to action.

When Jesus taught the crowds, He often ended His parables with the phrase, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” (Matthew 13:9). This wasn’t a call to passive listening but a challenge to respond. Obedience to God requires that we first hear His instructions, understand His desires, and align our lives accordingly.

Scripture gives us many examples of individuals whose obedience began with listening to God’s Word:

- **Abraham:** God called Abraham to leave his home and go to a land He would show him (Genesis 12:1-4). Abraham listened to God’s promise and obeyed, even though he didn’t have all the details.
- **Noah:** Noah’s obedience in building the ark began with listening to God’s instructions. His willingness to hear and act saved his family and preserved humanity (Genesis 6:13-22).

- **Mary:** When the angel Gabriel told Mary she would bear the Savior, her obedience began with listening and believing the Word of the Lord (Luke 1:38).

These examples remind us that listening is the gateway to faithful obedience. Each of these individuals had to hear God's Word before they could act in faith.

If listening is the first step to obedience, how can we cultivate a life that truly listens to God's Word?

1. **Read Scripture Daily:** Make time to read and reflect on God's Word. This is how we hear His voice today. Psalm 119:105 says, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."
2. **Meditate on the Word:** Don't just read; meditate on what God is saying. Consider how His Word applies to your life and what He's calling you to do.
3. **Attend Worship and Bible Study:** Faith comes by hearing, and one of the best ways to hear God's Word is through the preaching and teaching of His servants.
4. **Pray for Understanding:** Ask God to open your heart and mind to truly hear His Word. Like the psalmist, pray, "Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law" (Psalm 119:18).
5. **Practice Obedience:** True listening leads to action. When you hear God's Word, respond with a heart ready to obey.

We cannot obey God until we first listen to His Word. Faith is birthed in the hearing, and obedience flows from the understanding of what God has spoken. As Jesus said, "blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" (Luke 11:28). Let us commit to being people who not only hear but also do, who listen with the intent to follow, and who allow the Word of God to transform our lives.

Faith begins with listening. Will you take the time to hear what God is saying to you today?