

## What Does It Mean To Hear?

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*Father, we thank You, Father, for this day. Father, we have come to hear from You, O Lord. Yes Lord, You heard our worship, You heard our signing, You heard our songs; we seek the Giver; not the gift. Our hearts desire is to lift You high above all earthy kings, and to give You pleasure. Father, what a privilege, O Lord, that You give to Your children that we could please You. But You said it is impossible to please God without faith and I pray, Father, this evening, even as we meditate upon Your Word, I pray, Father, faith will arise that we'll walk closer to You even more; that You'll wash us with the water of Your Word; that You would set us apart even more, Father. You would anoint us that, Lord, that we will be able to hear Your voice even more clearly. Grant us grace to that end. We pray, even as we, Father, listen to Your Word, anoint the speaking as well as hearing of this Word. Let it bring life, Lord, because You said, O Lord Father, Your words are Spirit and they are life. Father, we want life; we want Your life flowing through us. Therefore, we surrender this evening to Yourself to You, O Lord and I pray, O Father that every one of us over here, Lord, who have come from work, I pray, Father, that, Lord, You would strength every one of us; that You quicken our mortal bodies; that You quicken our ears to hear Your voice. Thank You, Father. We praise You and we worship You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

Today's message is a kind of a corollary of last Wednesday's message, if you listened to it. I would encourage to keep listening. You heard about whom do you listen to? Last Wednesday. And I just wanted to emphasize on that. If you look at the word 'hear' in the Bible, it appears about 1159 times in the Old Testament, and about 480 odd times in the New Testament. So, hearing or listening is possibly the most important, if not, the most aspects of our growing in the Lord is hearing. If you remember in the Sunday school, we looked at the John Bunyan's book "Holy War" and this man soul guarded by 5 gates and one of the gate was the what gate? The ear gate remembers children and how does the enemy attack it? He doesn't attack through the eye gate or the nose gate; it attacks through the, what gate? Through the ear gate, right? Fantastic allegory by John Bunyan. So, it's a very important aspect. So, I mean, we wouldn't have heard enough of hearing. You hear about hearing and you want to hear more. Because there are so many aspects of hearing. So, many facets and so many dimensionalities to it that it's possibly quintessential of all the senses that has given the spiritual senses that God has given to us. "*Hear O Israel,*" remember? That's how the Jewish life starts right from their childhood. So, you looked at faith and hearing in our studies, right.

### **Hebrews 11:6**

***<sup>6</sup> And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.***

And how do we get this faith?

### **Romans 10:17**

***<sup>17</sup> So, then comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.***

So, this is so important for us, it's interesting that if you look at this the translation here, it's says

***...So, then faith comes by hearing...***

And you look at the word 'comes', it's in italics. In other words, the original translation does not have it; it's added by the translators to render the meaning of the word in Greek. If you remove 'comes', look at how it sounds!

***...So, then faith by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.***

You see? Faith by hearing, hearing by the Word of God. I mean by 'comes' is what is added. I mean, if you remove the 'comes', it's very interesting. *Faith by hearing, hearing by the Word of God.* Makes so much of senses, right? And we listening to that over and over again in our Church and we will look familiar Scripture but of course, from a different light of course.

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So, we know two important aspects about hearing – what we hear, and how we hear? Both found in the parable of the sower. Found in the *Gospel of Matthew chapter 13* and *Gospel according to Mark and Luke chapter 8*. All three of the Gospels, except *John's Gospel*, will talk about the parable of sower. And in fact, the *Gospel according to Mark* will go one step ahead and say that, "Did you understand this parable? And He says, "if you don't understand this parable, how will you understand any other parable?" So, the parable of the sower is the fundamental parable upon which every other parable is opened up, right? So, and in the *Gospel according to Mark*, He emphasizes on 'what we hear; part, the content of the hearing. Look at what He says, in *Gospel according to Mark chapter 4*. This is the parable of the sower. *Verses 24 to 25*.

### **Mark 4:24-25**

***<sup>24</sup> And he said to them, "Pay attention...***

Other translations will say "*Pay careful attention to what you hear,*"

***...And he said to them, "Pay attention to what you hear: with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you.***

In other words, what you hear now will determine how much you will hear in the future. You understand what I am saying? What you hear now will determine and of course and as the consequence of what happens to you in terms of obedience will determine how much you will hear in the future. So, many believers, over a period of time, they stop hearing. If you know the story of Abraham, Abraham was asked to leave his father's house, and he comes he comes to Haran and stuck in Haran for several years. And God stops speaking to him. He doesn't have the capacity or the disposition to hear Him. And he only hears when his father dies. And then, you'll see when he has Ishmael, 13 years, he doesn't hear God. So, further, hearing is determined by what you hear now. That is what he is trying to say, you see.

***<sup>25</sup> For to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away."***

I'll tell you such a practical thing you know. For example, you know it happened, it happens to all the students; it also happens to experienced teachers as well. So, if you come to class for example, "It's a difficult course and the professor will right away say, 'very difficult course; I will really encourage you to not miss even a single class'." Right? So, the first class, the students come; how they hear the first class will determines how they will hear the next class and the next class. I mean, it particularly happens in mathematics, because all the further concepts are completely depended upon what you hear in the first class. So, if you say, "Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, I understood," and you don't go back home and do the homework like the professor says, "You know what? I am giving you this assignment, you better finish the assignment. If you didn't finish the assignment, the next 2-3 classes will be Greek and Latin to you." You know, that's exactly what happens to many students. You know when they want to take tough courses, they don't credit the course; they audit the courses. How many of us audit the courses? Audit means they will go and check it first. They don't commit to the course. If you go to school, I mean, in India, if you go to IITs, it used to have auditing courses. What is auditing means? There is an adding and dropping of courses also, right? So, you add a particular course as an elective; you sit in the first class "Arrey, manchigundi class (the class is nice)." Depending upon what you what you hear and how much you understand, you will decide whether to continue the course or not. Otherwise, you will drop it. So, this is exactly what he is saying; how much you understand in the future will completely depend upon. This is so true in Christianity. However, it is not as tangible as it is in your university. Its more tangible but in Christianity it's also true in your walk with the Lord. So, how you hear now will determine how much you will hear in the future. You understand what I am saying? You get the point?

Just look at another place. In the New Living translation. Look at how he expounds it. Very interesting!

### **Mark 4:24-25**

***<sup>24</sup> Then he added, "Pay close attention to what you hear. (Same thing same translation. Same passage In the New Living Translation) The closer you listen, the more understanding you will be given—and you will receive even more. <sup>25</sup> To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding will be given. But for those who are not listening, even what little understanding they have will be taken away from them."***

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That's exactly what happens to those who take my course. By the time they come to the third and fourth class, little understanding they had in first class; that is all gone. Because they have not backed it up with consistent work by doing the assignments in order to apply it. So, therefore, you should be, and what is emphasized here is – what you hear? Look at *Proverbs*. You know what the first *Proverb* is?

### **Proverbs 1:5-6**

<sup>5</sup> **A wise man will hear** (A wise will hear. "Man" is just added there) **and increase learning**, (so, hearing and increase in your learning is directly proportional) **and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel**, <sup>6</sup> **To understand a proverb and an enigma, The words of the wise and their riddles.**

You know what the word 'enigma' is very interesting, actually. It's more to do with a person. My wife is an enigma to me. I mean, I have been married to her but sometimes, I don't understand she think or "My husband is an enigma to me." For many believers, God is an enigma. Arrey enti edi? Mereko samaj mein nahi ara. He is an enigma. He is an enigmatic personality.

<sup>6</sup> **To understand a proverb and an enigma, The words of the wise and their** (dark sayings) **riddles.**

KJV will use the word "dark sayings". Meaning for many believers, when they read the Bible, it is darkness. It is a dark saying. They don't understand it. Why? Because it is directly connected to hearing. You understand what I am saying? You getting it? So, in what you hear, therefore, has two components. What is the consequence in the hearing is. This what *Mark's Gospel* will talk about. What you hear has the direct effect on the fruit we hear.

### **Mark 4:20**

<sup>20</sup> **But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.**

You know what *Luke's Gospel* will say? Luke will not talk about thirty, *Luke* will not talk about sixty. *Luke* will only talk about only hundred. You know we have children who are studying in our school know what the benchmark is for them to pass? 90. What is attainable is 100! I am telling you if they consistently do their work, 100 is attainable. My dad used to always say, "Vijay, you can never score good in English, but one thing is guarantee if you do well in math, you can always score 100. It doesn't matter which examination." You can go to Ph.D. and score 100. That's exactly that happened to me. Quite some year back, I had to take one course, I was actually scared of the score and finally, in the final exam, I got 100. It's possible. That's the whole point. God doesn't give us something which is not possible. Getting it, children, huh?

So, therefore, there are two aspects for me as to what you hear, how do you determine how you hear? What should you be careful about? "*Pay close attention to what you hear*". So, what should I be careful about? In terms of determining what to hear. Is the question, right? First one, pay careful attention to the content. Very careful attention to the content. How will I know whatever is being preached is right content or wrong content? You know that is the reason why once you come to a Church, in our Church, what we teach you is to be a Berean believer.

### **Acts 17:11**

<sup>11</sup> **These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.**

In other words, it's so very important to be not carried away by personality but by the content of what the personality is bringing.

You know we were talking, I was teaching children about leaven of the Pharisee then they asked this question, "What is leaven?" "It's something added to roti, and it puffs up. "What does it mean? The content is nothing but it looks like it's very big. You know my children, the chocolate they like is candy cotton. Every time we go to Vizag, they say, "Papa, you must buy me candy cotton." What is candy cotton? It looks so huge. It's a huge candy cotton, you take a bite; gone. It is really candy cotton. No content in it. You see this is exactly what He is saying. You must be very careful. Be careful of *the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees*. Meaning, they have very little content but they have a lot of puff over there. And these guys

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don't understand, "Oh, He is rebuking us because we do not carry the bread." And He says, "Guys, you did you not understand? I am talking about the teaching of the Pharisees and the Sadducees." Of the Herodians rather, the Sadducees. So, be careful of the content of every sermon or every preaching that you hear on the internet or even from here. Go back and listen. This is something you need to do. I am practicing that now. And if you think, "Oh, it's one and half hours or two hours," no problem. If you have podcast, 1.5 times, you can actually increment it by 1.6 or 1.7 actually 1.8 is fantastic. Speed is good, and you also get the content. So, you can listen to a 2-hour sermon, let's say, in one hour thirty minutes or one fifteen sermons in 45 minutes. You go for a walk and you are done with a sermon. Listen to it over and over again. So, pay careful attention. That's exactly what Paul will say in

### Galatians 1:8-9

<sup>8</sup> ***But even if I,***

You see don't get carried away by my personality.

***...even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse! <sup>9</sup> As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody***

Yevaraina undani. It doesn't matter how big the name is. You have a real strong and very glorious opinion about him, doesn't matter.

***...If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God's curse!***

So, careful attention to the content. So, that is the reason what Paul will tell Timothy, right? "Rebuke, exhort, correct with all long suffering." That's what he says, "Rebuke, exhort, encourage with all long-suffering." Meaning, when you make a meal put some, Palak. You know, when I was growing up, everything was an examination only. All examination language, my mother used to say, "Vijay, palakura (spinach), compulsory question." What is the compulsory question? Meaning that if you don't eat that, you'll not get food, basically. So, she used to put palak. So, I have to eat the meal, I should take the palak and just gulp it out and eat the rest of the meal. So, he says, "Put palakura, put pappu, put egg, then also, put whatever sweet. But put everything. Just don't put laddus." So, content is very important. Otherwise, we all are going to become diabetic believers. What is diabetic believers? You know there is a dialogue in a movie, "Thinnadi thintey sachipothadu." In other words, if he eats a good meal, he will die. That is what diabetes means. His system cannot accept a good meal. Understand what I am saying? So, content is important. Get your spiritual body used to good wholesome meal of the Word of God. Content very important.

Second is equally important. See, Christianity is not just coming into a class and listening to a theory. No, it is apprenticeship. You know what apprentice is, right? You listen, you practice, you need mentors every step of the way. So, what is the second, in what you hear? The second important thing is not as important as content is. Second important, for me at least, is this – careful attention to the messenger, who is bearing the message. Do you understand what I am saying? You know one of the things, sometimes, if I want to know if a particular doctrine is right or wrong, who I search for? What does Zac Poonen think about it first? What does John Piper think about it? I listen to people because I know their lives. Look at how Paul tells Timothy, I love this verse, one of my favorite verses from the Bible.

### 2 Timothy 1:13

<sup>13</sup> ***Hold on to the pattern of (what teaching?) wholesome teaching you learned from me (this is a pattern. Look at how he is saying) a pattern shaped by the faith and love that you have in Christ Jesus.***

You see that? That is important. He is telling Timothy, "You know my teaching. And you know the pattern of my teaching. That is the reason why it says,

### Romans 6:17

<sup>17</sup> ***Thanks be to God though you were once slave to sins you obeyed from the heart to that pattern of teaching that was entrusted into your hands. And having become slaves from sins, you have been freed from sins.***

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You see, it's so important to hold on to the pattern of sound Words. In other words, very sure. That's the reason why Pastor keeps on telling "not many should be teachers." Why? Because teaching comes with an incredible responsibility. You stumble everybody else stumbles; He says,

### **Matthew 18:6**

***<sup>6</sup> If you cause one of these little ones to stumble, it is better for you to have a millstone around your neck, and to be drowned into the fire.***

Because your life should never become a stumbling block to others. And you know what He says? "Therefore, if your right eye causes you to stumble, remove it. If ear causes you to stumble, cut it off." Because it is so important because people are watching. What you are watching, what your listening, how you are listening, how you are walking – these are the decisions you are making. How are you handling money? Oh everybody. Everything is being watched. So important. Therefore, hold on to the pattern of teaching. So, what you listen to has two components – the content of the message and also the messenger. Therefore, look at what it says in *Proverbs chapter 13 and verse 20*. I love this verse. One of my favourite verses from the Bible. Can we all read it altogether?

### **Proverbs 13:20**

***<sup>20</sup> Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm.***

He who walks with wise men will be wise. I am hearing through a lot of James Stuart; how many are listening to James Stuart? I would recommend some of his teachings. You know in one of messages, he says, "One of the things that happen to my life, I choose whom I will hang out with. I was an 18-year-old student in my University, but you know the people I was hanging out with? I was hanging out with 40-year-old Pastor and elders who are elders who are much more senior to me. Those were the people I was hanging out with." Think about it; how many of you think it is cool to hang out with Pastor? No, I am asking you a very serious question. It's a game changer. These fruits; it has become a pithy maxim or a pithy in contemporary sayings, right? Look at some of the contemporaries' sayings. You know them very well. Show me your friends and I'll tell who you are. How many have you heard this? A little tweak slight tweak. "Show me your friends and I'll show you your future." I was just googling this. I was trying to look up certain of these pithy maxims and I found a killer. Look at this is fantastic this is something Biblical as well look at what it says. Fantastic. "Hang out with those who have a common future not a common past." And you know, how many of us want to go to how many of us have failed in life. "Oh! she understands my problem; nobody in the Church understands." Where are they going? I am not saying that you should not go there. No. But do they have a common future? Very important. That is the reason why bad company corrupts good manners. I am telling you honestly; many of us young people have no idea whom we should hang out with. No idea. You see? I learnt from James sir. I said hang out with your Pastor. Learn that. If you hang out with your Pastor with sufficiently long period of time, consistently, every day, not one day; what do you say in Telugu? Once in a while say "hi", what will he able to say? Nothing; he will also say "hi" and also, say "bye" very quickly. Let's come back to *Proverbs chapter 13*. So, hang out; choose your mates very carefully, my dear brothers and sisters. What friendship has darkness with light? Because I'll tell you, whenever you meet, you are always exchanging ideas. It's the transaction is never neutral. Either iron is sharpening iron, or you are getting blunter and blunter. *Proverbs chapter 13 verse 20*. Look at several translations. I want to get a particular word and don't want to use it I want the Bible to use it. Different translations see what word I want to use.

### **Proverbs 13:20**

***<sup>20</sup> He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.***

That is NIV. I didn't like. It didn't really drive home the point. Because I didn't find the word. I wanted some more intense word to come out.

***<sup>20</sup> Walk with the wise and become wise; associate with fools and get in trouble.***

Okay. Sometimes, we don't like Good News Translation, but this is real good news. This is what Good News Translation will say.

***<sup>20</sup> Keep company with the wise and you will become wise. If you make friends with stupid people, you will be ruined.***

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As clear as day. So, association is so important. See, you should be able to recognize whether they are being a positive influence or a negative influence. The word 'recognize' is very interesting 're-cognize'. Cognition re Cognito; meaning, understand what the person is saying, what is the perceive the person. Just don't blindly choose. So, what we hear is very important. Right?

You'll see this example in the Old Covenant. It's a fantastic example and the way the whole thing works out. *1 Kings chapter 1 verse 3*. It becomes a game-changer. This is after Solomon dies and Rehoboam becomes a king of joint Israel. Israel is still not divided. So, Jeroboam who already has a prophecy spoken over his life. He still doesn't want to choose that path. So, he goes to Rehoboam and this is what he says.

### **1 Kings 12:2-11**

<sup>3</sup>*that they sent and called him. Then Jeroboam and the whole assembly of Israel came and spoke to Rehoboam, saying,* <sup>4</sup>*"Your father made our yoke heavy; now therefore, lighten the burdensome service of your father, and his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you."* (Rehoboam answered, young man who just became a king,) <sup>5</sup>*So he said to them, "Depart for three days, then come back to me." And the people departed.*

And look at this. Whom you hear matters! See what happens here.

<sup>6</sup>*Then King* (Who? First it started with Rehoboam. Now the narrative changes.) *Rehoboam consulted the elders who stood before his father Solomon while he still lived, and he said, "How do you advise me to answer these people?"* (Look at their reply.)<sup>7</sup> *And they spoke to him, saying, "If you will be a servant to these people today,...*

Wow! You know what? How many of you want to succeed in your career? Okay. Let me ask you this question. How many of you want to have a ruined career? Show me your hands. How many of you want to have a successful career? Show me your hands. Jyothi you don't want to have? Hands up in the air. Straight! Oh, all right! That's good. Some people don't want. That's okay. They're questioning, whether they should have a successful career? Is it Biblical? Is it spiritual to have? Let me tell you something. There's nothing wrong in having a successful career in terms of success in terms of the kingdom. Do you really want to be a successful person? Be a servant, wherever you are. Your attitude towards other will determine your success. Look at what they say,

*...and serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them...*

They will always be your, what? Oh! You see? You want people to serve you, you serve them. That's exactly what Jesus says in *Matthew chapter 6*. He says, "As you would have other do unto you, do unto them." For what? This is the law and the prophets. Okay. Rehoboam was clever or stupid? We'll know very soon.

*...then they will be your servants forever."* <sup>8</sup> *But he rejected the advice which the elders had given him, and consulted the young men who had grown up with him, who stood before him.* (These are all people who are his sycophants. You know, it's called sycophant symphony. O King! You are great!) <sup>9</sup> *And he said to them, "What advice do you give? How should we answer this people who have spoken to me, saying, 'Lighten the yoke which your father put on us?'"* <sup>10</sup> *Then the young men who had grown up with him spoke to him, saying, "Thus you should speak to this people who have spoken to you, saying, 'Your father made our yoke heavy, but you make it lighter on us'—thus you shall say to them: 'My little finger shall be thicker than my father's waist!*

In other words, you know what they are saying in popular Telugu colloquial? "Mama! Nuvvu king mama! You are king! And you have to serve others? They should serve you." Have you heard that, "You don't have to serve others? They should serve you"? Have you heard that? This is a common thing among youngsters. "Mama! King mama! You are a king! My little finger will be fatter than my father's waist." Solomon, I don't know whether he was having a six pack or a family pack. But I'm sure he was arrayed in a lot of glory to hide his belly. I'm sure.

<sup>11</sup> *And now, whereas my father put a heavy yoke on you, I will add to your yoke; my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scourges!' "*

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And what happened? You know what happened, right? A divided kingdom! Absolute division and downfall started when one guy chose to listen to flattery. He chose to listen. Therefore, it is very very important whom you listen to. Young people, be very careful. Hang out with elders. Stick with them. Don't eat their head. But learn from them. You can ask them questions. That's not a problem. You see, learn, hang out. So many people don't hang out, even in our Church. They don't hang out. They avoid pastor very conveniently. "O pastor! Naaku bhayam (I'm afraid.)" Bhayama? What bhayam? (What fear?) That is the reason why you're not growing. For me also it was bhayam. But I overcame my bhayam (fear). And one of the things I do now consistently is every day in the morning, I knock at his door. And I wait; what's he going to say? Very important. Very very important. So, the content and the messenger, very important for growth. Look at this. This is,

### 2 Timothy 2:22.

**<sup>22</sup> Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.**

You see that? Everybody? Association is very important. So, what you hear has two components: the content and the messenger. Both. You'll see this working out fantastically in one Church. Look at how it just works out. Superb! Look at how it says in,

### 1 Thessalonians 1:5-7

**<sup>5</sup> For our gospel did not come to you in word only, (That means not just the content,) but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know (Look at this!) what kind of men we were among you for (For whose sake?) your sake. (That's exactly what Jesus said, "For your sake I sanctify myself." Not only the content of the message was right, the messengers who carried the content were also right and then what happened?) <sup>6</sup> And you became followers of (who first? Of us first. And then) us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, (So what happened?) <sup>7</sup> so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe.**

You see, how the pattern is: these guys hear not only the content, they follow the pattern and they become examples to others. That is a promise. Therefore, what you hear has a direct relationship with what you become ultimately. You got that everybody? Second: that is what we hear. Second is how we hear. Let's read that. It's found in *Luke 8:18*. Same parable of the sower.

### Luke 8:18

**<sup>18</sup> Therefore (Read that everybody. ) take heed how you hear. For whoever has, (Same thing again. Same construction.) to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him.**

What does it mean? To understand what is going on over here, to determine; see, here, it's taking about the attitude with which you listen. There, it is taking about the content to which you listen. Here it is talking about what? The attitude with which you listen. In order to understand the attitude, you should pay careful attention to the words here. It's very interesting! To hear, what does it mean to here? What does it mean to listen? What does 'to hear' mean in its totality? It comes from the Old covenant, the Greek has only one word and one meaning typically. Hebrew, how many of you know the Hebrew word for 'hear'? Anybody can tell me that? 'Shama'. O yes! Shama! "Shama O Israel!" Hear O Israel, the Lord your God is one. The Lord is one. The first prophet also prophet cum judge of the Old Testament is who? The first prophet cum judge cum seer of the old testament—Samuel. It's Samuel. You know it is actually Shu-mo-el, which is a combination of shama and el, which means, the Lord hears. Why does the Lord hear Samuel? Because Samuel hears the Lord. Very simple! You got it? Shumo-el! It's the word Shama – to hear.

### Deuteronomy 6:4

**<sup>4</sup> "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!**

The point I'm trying to make here is, it is just not important what you hear, what are the other synonyms of the word 'hear' rendered into the English language. What does it mean? What does the message of the word 'shama' mean? In order to understand that, let us look at a very interesting passage in the old covenant which encapsulates in its totality the meaning of the word 'shama'. It's actually two. Don't say all my parents are here. You say two of my parents are here. *Genesis 22*. It encapsulates in its totality the meaning of the word 'shama'. Keep that in mind and we're looking at how we hear. This is

**Genesis 22:1-4, 9-12**

<sup>1</sup>Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."  
<sup>2</sup>Then He said, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." (You know the story. When does Abraham start?)  
<sup>3</sup>So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.  
<sup>4</sup>Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off.

<sup>9</sup>Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood.  
<sup>10</sup>And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.  
<sup>11</sup>But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, (How many times?) "Abraham, Abraham!" So he said, "Here I am."  
<sup>12</sup>And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."

And in verse 18, He gives him this promise and this is where we hear the word 'shama'. And I want you to guess the word, 'shama'.

**Genesis 22:18**

<sup>18</sup>In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.

Let's do a Hebrew class here. Tell me which is the word 'shama'? Ah! Obey is 'shama'. So, what you hear, how you hear. If you do not hear the word of God with an attitude of obedience, it doesn't matter how difficult it might seem, if I do not obey it, I've not heard it. That's exactly what James says. He says, "My brothers, be doers of the word and not just hearers only." But what will you do if you don't? "You deceive yourselves." It's very important how you hear. And James will capture this exact narrative in his epistle. This is what he says in,

**James 2:20-24**

<sup>20</sup>But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? <sup>21</sup>Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? <sup>22</sup>Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? <sup>23</sup>And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God. <sup>24</sup>You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. (Do you know how he concludes that chapter? He says,) <sup>26</sup>For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works (obedience) is dead also.

And you know what? The important thing is just not obeying the general as I said, it's obeying the specific. They'll be one specific thing that you don't want to do. But you'll have to do it. And it starts with little things in your life by the way. Look at it.

**1 Samuel 15:1-3, 10-13**

<sup>1</sup>Samuel also said to Saul, "The LORD sent me to anoint you king over His people, over Israel. Now therefore, heed the voice of the words of the LORD (Which word is the word shama? Heed. Thank you.) <sup>2</sup>Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'I will punish Amalek for what he did to Israel, how he ambushed him on the way when he came up from Egypt. <sup>3</sup>Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.' "(Everything! Radical! To the root! I'm not going through the entire passage. You know the story. )  
<sup>10</sup>Now the word of the LORD came to Samuel, saying, <sup>11</sup>"I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king, for he has turned back from following Me, and has not performed My commandments." And it grieved Samuel, and he cried out to the LORD all night. (Look at what it says.)  
<sup>12</sup>So when Samuel rose early in the morning to meet Saul, it was told Samuel, saying, "Saul went to Carmel, and indeed, he set up a monument for himself; and he has gone on around, passed by, and gone down to Gilgal."  
<sup>13</sup>Then Samuel went to Saul, and Saul said to him, "Blessed are you of the LORD! I have performed the commandment of the LORD."

You see how different God sees and he sees? This is what he says, and you know what Samuel says?



## What Does It Mean To Hear?

### **1 Samuel 15:19**

**<sup>19</sup> Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD? (You see that? What is the word 'shama' here? It's obey.) Why did you swoop down on the spoil, and do evil in the sight of the LORD?"**

You know it is very interesting. If you're willing and obedient, you know what the word obedient is? 'Shama'! You'll eat the best of the land. So, there is an attitude with which you hear. See, you have already made a decision, it's like this; when my mother says, "I'm going out to Church. Don't watch TV," that's a commandment. You already made up your mind. She's going and I'm watching. You see? Your body goes where your mind is. You keep hearing that, right? Your body goes where your mind has already gone. And you'll find this always in hoardings also these days. Like I've seen one of the hoarding of an engineering college – Think placements, think CMR. Did you see that hoarding? Think placement, think CMR. In other words, if you really want good placement, think about us and when you keep thinking about us, eventually, we'll have you. Basically. You already know. You already made up your mind what to do here. You see. So, you could be hearing message after message. But you could have already made up your mind whether to obey or not. You see? That is important. That is why the attitude to the word is so important. You see. You have not obeyed. God says, "You did not obey." What does Saul say? I obeyed. And you know what God says, "What do you mean?"

### **1 Samuel 15:20-22**

**<sup>20</sup> And Saul said to Samuel, "But I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and gone on the mission on which the LORD sent me, and brought back Agag king of Amalek; I have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. <sup>21</sup> But the people took of the plunder, sheep and oxen, the best of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal. <sup>22</sup> So Samuel said: "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams.**

See, you see the word 'shama' occurring again and again. Shama – heed, obey. Otherwise, rebellion is as the sin of sorcery. We heard that.

### **1 Samuel 15:23**

**<sup>23</sup> For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from being king.**

You know what he's saying? "If you haven't completely obeyed, if you don't have the disposition of obeying My Word completely to the end, it doesn't matter if you think you've obeyed, you've actually rejected it." You need to understand. Therefore, faith, genuine faith, by the way, will always lead us to obedience.

You will see the two book-ends of the *Book of Romans*, if you will. I have learnt this new word – 'book-ends'. What does 'book-end' mean? How the book starts and how it ends. Let's see the *Book of Romans*.

### **Romans 1:5**

**<sup>5</sup> Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name.**

How does it end? Look at,

### **Romans 16:25-27**

**<sup>25</sup> Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began <sup>26</sup> but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, (what?) for obedience to the faith—  
<sup>27</sup> to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.**

That's how it ends. So, it begins with obedience and it ends with faith. That is the reason why, "The Gospel is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for in it, the righteousness of God is revealed from (what?) faith (first) to faith (last)."

### **Romans 1:16-17**

## What Does It Mean To Hear?

<sup>16</sup> *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.*<sup>17</sup> *For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."*

And that is obedience which is increasing from first to last. If you don't obey and give some sacrifice to God, that sacrifice will be an abomination in His sight. I have; I don't have to say this. This is found in *Proverbs 28:9*, look at what it says.

### **Proverbs 28:9**

<sup>9</sup> *One who turns away his ear from (what? Even if) hearing the law, Even his prayer is an abomination.*

Forget about anything else; his prayer also becomes an abomination because he has no inclination to obey completely. So, what we hear has two parts – the content and the messenger. How we hear has the attitude, and the attitude God is looking for is obedience. We look at these two, right? What we hear, who we hear, how we hear? How we can accomplish this? So that we can please God, so that our hearing pleases God. I was thinking about it; you know, one of the very common problem we all struggle, right? Here, we struggle with the content so many times; we say, "This is too tough. I don't want to listen to it." We struggle so much with the kind of people we want to hang out with. We're always between two opinions whether we want to hang out with the crowd which is cool and hang out with the crowd we think are boring. And we always have a struggle with obedience. There is, like we always study in our Church, we don't look at the periphery; we look at the depth; we look at the reasons as to why we choose what to hear, and why we hear. If you tackle that reason, then we have actually tackle the problem of hearing; do you know that? So, the question we need to ask ourselves is: where does the problem actually lies in our hearing? You got that everybody? How many of you want to know the solution to the problem? Some people are saying, "Kya hai solution? Kya hai problem? What is the problem?" You don't have a clue-cotton picking idea as to what I am saying but listen to it again, you will understand; As it says in *Book of Hebrews*, right? "The word which they heard did not profit them because they didn't mix it with faith." You know what ESV, says? It says,

### **Hebrews 4:2**

<sup>2</sup> *For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened.*

In the other words, Word is coming; He is looking for faith; no faith, gone. It's like the Word is foreign. I gave this example, some time back in the Church. I remember one of my friend who went to Sweden to study. Long time back, this was in 2003-2002, when Sweden opened its doors for foreign students, which they regret now. They opened up their doors to foreign students and to give them tuition free education. Look at the foolishness. That apart, but our Gultis (Telugus) have taken advantage of that. They said, "We'll go to do our masters." So, this guy ended up in Sweden, way back in 2003. And he came to Canada to do his Ph.D. So, both of us were room-mates, brilliant guy. He can play blind fold chess. He is a fantastic brilliant kid. He's name is 'Emma Raju' by the way. Emma Raju, very very famous last name. His brother is a professor in Standford, brilliant guy. Let me tell you the story of this guy. "You know what, Vijay? In Sweden, when I went the first time, they were actually receiving foreign students in their land and all the people were 'Xenophobic,' like Phobia-fear of strangers. And they were so afraid of strangers, I felt so unwelcomed. I said, "What do you mean you felt so unwelcomed?" "I'll tell you, what happened –I was walking down the street once, and I saw a family 200 meters from me and they just looked at me. Even as I was approaching their door, standing outside the door and they looked at me, their face changed and they ran inside the door and shut the door. And the second incidence was, in Sweden, the population is so low, anybody who is using public transport just have to wave his hand and bus will stop. So, this guy was going to university and the bus is going and the driver looked at him and he went. 100 Meters down the line, there was this locality who was there and she waved her hand, that fellow stopped. He said, "Vijay, I felt so unwelcomed. My God!" I had such a terrible time two years just getting myself and it was cold on top of that it is more depressing, when you can't talk to people and it is cold. You know that, right? In cold countries, cold is depressing. It really depresses you. I heard that and I was like, the Word of God is coming and it comes into your life and you look at the Word of God in your life and you say, "No, no," you run into your home and you close the door because it doesn't find faith in you. It's foreign. It's absolutely foreign to you. That's exactly it says, people who heard it, didn't find favor because it didn't find faith. God is asking does he find faith in you? That's exactly the question in *Luke 18*,

### **Luke 18:8**

## What Does It Mean To Hear?

**<sup>8</sup> I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"**

So, we have to tackle the root problem, you see. The problem is not what we hear, the problem is not who we hear, the problem is not how we hear actually; the problem is this; let's all read that together, "Who has your ear?" That is the problem, lot of difference. The problem is not what you hear, the problem is not who you hear; the problem is – who has your ear? I am not speaking extra Biblical. By the way, this is mentioned once in the Old Covenant and once in the New Covenant. I am going to look at both these, before we stop for the day. This is found in *Jeremiah 6:10*,

### **Jeremiah 6:10**

**<sup>10</sup> To whom shall I speak and give warning, That they may hear?...**

You see the problem? I want these guys to hear but whom shall I give? And He tells the root cause, this is called the RCA analysis.

***...Indeed their ear is uncircumcised, And they cannot give heed. Behold, the word of the LORD is a reproach (Or Offense) to them; They have no delight in it.***

Why? The whole idea is because your ear is uncircumcised. What is uncircumcised ears? You know circumcision is a symbol of separation, right? That's what we hear in our Church over and over again. You are set apart, this is the covenant that God has given you. The mark of the covenant is that – you are circumcised. What you are circumcised is an outward symbol of the inward reality which is a sign saying that, "I am separated unto God." So, what does circumcised ear means? "My ear is (what?) separated unto God." In other words, who has my ear? God has my ear. Look at this found so vividly in the *Old Covenant*, look at how it says in the *Book of Deuteronomy*. Who does your ear belongs to? This is found in the *Book of Deuteronomy chapter, 15*. Read that very carefully.

### **Deuteronomy 15:12-14**

**<sup>12</sup> "If your brother, a Hebrew man, or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you and serves you six years, then in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you.<sup>13</sup> And when you send him away free from you, you shall not let him go away empty-handed;<sup>14</sup> you shall supply him liberally from your flock, from your threshing floor, and from your winepress. From what the LORD your God has blessed you with, you shall give to him.**

I tell you something, were we not slaves to sin? Yes, we were all slaves to sin. God bought us. Yes. This is just a picture of redemption. He redeems us and then, you know what he says? He lets us go. Do you know that? Remember Isaiah? Isaiah goes to the temple and he meets the most unexpected Person, Jesus. Many Christians come to Church; they don't expect to meet Jesus. Isaiah also went with that attitude but found Jesus that day. When he found Jesus, his whole life changed. You know what he said? "I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell among a people of unclean lips." Then, what happened? The seraphim took the coals from the altar, rushes towards him and touches his tongue, "Your iniquity has been purged; your sin has been atoned for. You are free." And then, the Lord will ask, "Who will go for Us?" He doesn't say, "Isaiah, go for us." No, "Who will go for Us?" It is still a question. You know what Isaiah says? "Lord! !!" "Okay, you will go? Those fellows will hear but they will not hear. They will see but they will not see. And you will make their hearts even more hard." This is a picture of salvation to all of us. This is just a picture. I'm not literally saying. This is a picture. God purchases but He lets us go and He blesses us. That's exactly what He says. He blessed them.

Look at this; this is the connection over here,

### **Deuteronomy 15:15**

**<sup>15</sup> You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you; therefore I command you this thing today.**

"The reason why I'm commanding you this this day is because the LORD your God redeemed you," but? This is interesting. This is fantastic. I love this.

## What Does It Mean To Hear?

When Paul uses this paradigm of slave and master in Romans 6, he says, “I’m using this because of the infirmity of your flesh. Don’t get offended because I’m using this ‘master-slave’ analogy; you don’t know what kind of a Master you have. You have no idea who your Master is.”

### **Deuteronomy 15:16-17**

**<sup>16</sup> And if it happens that he says to you, ‘I will not go away from you,’ because he loves you and your house, since he prospers with you, <sup>17</sup> then you shall take an awl and thrust it through his ear to the door, and he shall (I love this,) be your servant forever. (And it’s just not man; both men and women,) Also to your female servant you shall do likewise.**

What does it mean? From that day, this fellow says, “Master, you have my ear. I am not going to listen anybody; I am going to listen only to you and you alone.” Then, it doesn’t matter what you hear, how you hear and who you hear, “because my ear is tuned to You; I will hear Your voice alone, even if it is from a donkey.”

Look at Jesus; the greatest paradigm. You will see that in His life in such a fantastic way. It is found in the *Book of Psalms 40*.

### **Psalm 40:6-9**

**<sup>6</sup> Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened (pierced (That’s what it actually means. Pierced it; not open.): burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. <sup>7</sup> Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, <sup>8</sup> I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.**

“My ear belongs to You.” Christian, my dear brothers and sisters, who has your ear today, this morning? Does God have your ear?

Then, what happens?

**<sup>9</sup> I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. <sup>10</sup> I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation.**

“You know why? Because You have My ear.” The guy who has your ear has you. Do you want to know whether the teaching is right or not? This is what Jesus will say in *John’s Gospel chapter 7*.

### **John 7:16-18**

**<sup>16</sup> Jesus answered, “My teaching is not my own. It comes from the one who sent me. <sup>17</sup> Anyone who chooses to do the will of God will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.**

It’s a choice, my brothers and sisters. God is not going to force Himself upon you; it’s upon us; it’s your choice. You are saying by your own free will saying, “Lord, my ear belongs to You.”

**<sup>17</sup> Anyone who chooses to do the will of God will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.**

In other words, He says, “Do you want to know if My speaking is of My own authority or if I am speaking from God?” If you delight to choose to do His will? See, so many of us had not made a choice to do His will. They are still wavering in the valley of decision. Millions and millions in the valley of decision; they are still vacillating between two opinions. They have not made up their mind. It is so important and they are in a pathetic state and I have seen this in so many believers. They are still vacillating between two opinions; they have not made up their mind. “It doesn’t matter what I am going through, Lord, You have my ear. Even it is difficult, I don’t care but I know I want to hear You and You have my ear.”

**<sup>18</sup> Whoever speaks on their own does so to gain personal glory, but he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him.**

## What Does It Mean To Hear?

It's very interesting what John says in *John 7*, what His brothers say, "Go to Jerusalem if You want to be known and nobody will do these acts secretly." You know what He says? "My time has not yet come." And He doesn't go with them but after a while, He goes. It's strange. I mean, it's very interesting and Zac Poonen gave this example. To understand this, let's suppose we have a police officer standing at Begumpet chowrastha (junction) with his walky talky and his colleague comes on the bike. He comes on his bike and asks, "Where are you going?" He says, "I'm going to the police station. Will you come along?" He says, "No, I'm not coming. You go." So, he goes off and he reaches the police station in 20 minutes. After ten minutes, he sees his colleague, he takes a lift from some other guy. It happens in Hyderabad, police people taking lift forcefully and they sit on your bike and say, "Drop me." He finds his friend ten minutes later come into the police station. And this fellow will ask, "Arey em ayyindhi? (Oh, what happened?) When I came and asked you whether you want to come to the police station, you didn't come and how come you came now?" He says, "I have a walky talky and sir called me; therefore, I came." That's exactly what happened to Jesus. "Where are you going?" "Jerusalem. You also come." "No, I am not coming; you go." After few minutes, you find Him and they ask, "How did You come?" "Walky talky, My Father said. He has My ear. I am not going to be swayed by your opinion." "Oh, You are telling me lies." "Even if you can think that I tell lies, it's okay but I just heard from My Father; He has My ear. He asked Me to come and I came. I don't care what you think now. It doesn't matter." So, it's very important who has your ear. Look at Paul, what he says and this is called the concept of a bond servant it's found in *Romans 1*,

### **Romans 1:1**

**<sup>1</sup> Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, (incidentally) called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God.**

My ear belongs to God, I am a bondservant of Jesus and I will hear Him alone. That's how he says, "I wish I had come to you by God's will."

### **Romans 1:13**

**<sup>13</sup> Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles.**

Question today, my dear young brothers; who has your ear? How do you know that God has your ear? For you, do your parents have your ear? Do your mentors have your ear? Do your teachers have your ear? Do they have your ear? Everybody wants success but nobody wants to listen.

Before we conclude, let's see in what context the uncircumcised ears is used. In the New Covenant, we look at the attitude of Stephen in *Acts 7*,

### **Acts 7:51-53**

**<sup>51</sup> "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit**

How did he come to the conclusion? "Because you resist the Holy Spirit." You see the attitude? The moving of the Holy Spirit in your life determines who has your ear. That is the reason why Pastor keeps on telling, "Don't quench the Holy Spirit, don't grieve the Holy Spirit and don't insult the Holy Spirit." Why? Because that is such an important aspect of our growth because our hearing is completely depend upon how we receive the Holy Spirit.

**<sup>52</sup> Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, <sup>53</sup> who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it."**

What happens? You know what happens? They kill Him. Warren made a fantastic statement; he said, "When the Jews consented in the murder of John, they rejected God the Father because John was a man send by God. When they crucified Jesus on the Cross, they rejected God the Son and when they martyred Stephen, they rejected God the Holy Spirit." *Acts 7*; the Jewish evangelism is over; *Acts 8*, Samaria; *Acts 9* is conversion of Paul and then, Cornelius and then, it's the Gentiles. *John 16*, why is this important? This is about Holy Spirit.

### **John 16:8-11**

## What Does It Mean To Hear?

**<sup>8</sup> And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: <sup>9</sup> of sin, because they do not believe in Me; <sup>10</sup> of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; <sup>11</sup> of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.**

It's so important; when conviction takes place, how we respond is so very important, my dear brothers and sisters. So, we try to tackle the problem at the superficial level but there is a deeper problem but you know what? Our ears don't belong to God. Therefore, what does the Holy Spirit say?

### **Hebrews 3:7-11**

**<sup>7</sup> Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you will hear His voice, <sup>8</sup> Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, In the day of trial in the wilderness, <sup>9</sup> Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, And saw My works forty years. <sup>10</sup> Therefore I was angry with that generation, And said, 'They always go astray in their heart, And they have not known My ways.' <sup>11</sup> So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.' "**

Today, you make a choice; it's a growth, it's a process and it starts with little things like obeying your parents. That's exactly how Samuel started his career of hearing. You know how the *Book of Chronicles* ends? It's called as the Samuel the seer. How did Samuel become the seer? Because he heard and how did his career of hearing begin? By hearing his mother first. Second – hearing Eli and then, hearing God. That is how he graduated. It starts with little things and we have to practice these over and over again; familiar voices, we hear and we will be able to hear the unfamiliar voice of God. Familiar means that we become too casual. No, but we will know.

So, this evening, let us make a decision saying, "Lord, circumcise my ear so that I can hear Your voice alone." Can we all stand up this evening in the house of God? I'm telling you, this is the burden of my own heart, my own struggles and I wish I could change so much of things in my past, the things which I have done in my past, wasted not hearing, I don't want to do that anymore. We believe that this year is the year of destiny for all of us, right? But it comes with hearing. Make a choice, a decision today and say, "Lord, my ear belongs to You, willingly, Lord, because You have redeemed me and grant me the grace that I will delight to do Your will so that Your law will be in my heart." Shall we pray?

### **Closing Prayer:**

*Lord, this evening, we want to hear You more and more, Lord. Circumcise our ears this evening. So many of us are struggling with obedience; not because it's difficult to obey. You said that, "My commandments are not burdensome," it is because we don't love and we don't love, it's because we have uncircumcised hearts and we have uncircumcised hearts because we have uncircumcised ears. O Father and You will not circumcise our ears by force; it is our decision to make because You will not force Yourself upon us. Yes, You will circumcise our hearts. That's what You have promised. The Lord Your God will circumcise your hearts that you may love Him and keep His commandments but, Lord, You will never ever force Yourself on us; it is our choice to make today, Lord Father. We don't want to vacillate between two opinions; we want to acknowledge as we sang today, Lord, that You are our King and we want to hear Your voice and Your voice alone; it doesn't matter which vessel You choose to speak to us, Lord; we pray, Father, that our ears will be attentive to You and the vessel will not matter. Father, You will be able to speak to us even through a donkey because our ears belong to You. Therefore, Father, we take our will and say circumcise our ears and our ears belong to You. Can you just make a confession this evening if it is your conviction? Say, "Lord, my ears belong to You, Lord. You have my ears. Grant us the delight to do Your will." Father, we just thank You for this evening. Grant us grace, Lord, to make decisions. To even make a decision, Lord, You said, "To work out our salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you to will and to obey." O Father, what a promise! Even to will, we need Your strength. We come to You Lord and say we surrender and You have our ear. Thank You. We praise You. We worship You, Father, and even as Your children go from this place, give them an assurance to wilfully submit themselves to You and the love of God will shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit. That is what You promised us, O Lord Father that we experience Your joy of obedience because You said, "Righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit; that is the Kingdom of God." O Father, grant us joy. We praise You and worship You. We give You glory, honour and praise. In Jesus' Mighty Name we pray, Amen!*