

Discern Voices and Strengthen Faith

Pastor Vijay

www.gracetabernaclehyd.org

Father once again we commit ourselves to You, to Your hands O Lord. Speak to our hearts this morning, strengthen us in our faith, empower us by Your Spirit and cause us to walk in Your ways. Anoint us to hear, to obey and Lord to witness what You will wrought in each one of our lives, even through the ministry of the Word, minister faith to us this morning we thank You we praise You, in Jesus name. Amen

Hallelujah. Two things when we come to the Word of God. *Hebrews 3:12* will say

Hebrews 3:12

¹²Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; ¹³ but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

That does not mean that we don't come to church but what happens is that we have lost that living and that abiding relationship with God. So what do we do to combat a possibility of obtaining this evil heart of unbelief, what do we do? We exhort or encourage one another daily while it is called today. You need to understand the difference and we know that we've been hearing for so many times, faith is always connected to the present. Hope is connected to the future. Faith is connected to the heart, hope is connected to the mind. So, this evil heart of unbelief, that is the reason why it says, "An evil heart, or an evil and an unbelieving heart in departing from the living God." So, what should you do? Strengthen, everyday strengthen yourself. Otherwise what happens is that we become hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. That is the reason why the Bible says, "When the Holy Spirit comes He will convict the world of sin. Why? Because they do not believe in me. Remember in John 16." He will convict the world of sin because they do not believe in Me. Unbelief is the root cause of every problem in our life; unbelief and pride. Two twin brothers or twin sisters if you want to call them. Therefore, what do we do? It goes on to say.

Hebrews 3:14

¹⁴For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, ¹⁵ while it is said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."

That is the reason why we come together to the ministry of the Word as often as we can so that we are strengthened in our faith. Second reason why we come to the ministry of the Word of God. *Hebrews 10* this is another important exhortation. By the way the epistle to the Hebrews is full of exhortations and warning and we need to really take those warnings seriously because there are some warnings which will scare us but it is good to have the fear of God. *Hebrews 10:23*

Hebrews 10:23-25

²³Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, ²⁵ not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

So, the first reason why we come to gather to study the Word of God, as long as it is today, we want to exhort ourselves so that we do not develop an evil and an unbelieving heart so that our faith is strengthened. Second, we also want to be stirred up unto love and good works. Two aspects that are important why because we know from *Galatians 5:6* it says,

Galatians 5:6

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.

In that one verse there are at least four dimensions. What are the four dimensions? The first is that God does not care about the external rituals that you follow. You need to understand, any external ritual does not please God. Like we come and worship, like Pastor was saying if God does not accept our worship, it is just a ritual. We just conform to some kind of

discipline of going to church every Sunday paying your tithes or reading your Bible. External attributes, all these externalities don't please God, what pleases God is faith. Where? In the heart. That is the second aspect. What matters is faith in the heart. Not any external adherence to any church or disciplines or dogmas. What matters is faith.

Third aspect, the faith that expresses or works. Faith has to work. Derek prince says there are three musts in faith. Faith must be confessed. Faith must be acted out. Faith must be tested. There are the three musts of faith. So, faith has to be expressed. So, externalities don't matter to God. What matters is faith in the heart and the faith that is expressed or that is being acted out. How is it been acted out? In love. These are the four aspects in that particular verse. So, what do we do? We want to ensure that we want to be strengthened in faith and be exhorted to love one another because these are two important things in the last days, because the Bible says when the Son of Man comes back will He find faith. And He says in the last days because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. So, these two will be attacked. These two aspects, faith and love will be under constant attack. So, that is something which we need to really be warned about and we've been warned about these two things. So, don't let the familiarity of the text distract you from what God has for us. Again *1 Timothy 6:12* I'm just showing you some verse which we've already seen. Fight the good fight.

1 Timothy 6:12

¹²Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

So that means you have to fight for it. That means definitely there will be an opposition. Expect opposition to faith. Let me tell you something, the world system is not conducive for spiritual growth. It will not encourage. There will be an opposition to faith. That is the reason why the Kingdom of God advances by violence and the violent take it by force. Therefore, there is a disposition of the believer if you will in pulling up the socks and saying, "You know what it's a battle. This requires discipline." Think about it, faith must be confessed. Think about it. What does confession mean? Making your words agree to what the Word of God says. You think that is easy? No. Think about it, every situation that you face in your life, can you actually confess in that situation for example let's say you are feeling condemned? What should you confess? At least at that point in time you should know what you should confess. There is therefore, now no condemnation for those who are in Christ. What shall we say of these things, if God be for us, who can be against us. Who can bring any charge against God's elect, it is God who justifies. Who is it to condemn, it is Christ who died for us, Christ who rose from the dead, Christ who is seated at the right hand of the Father, forever making intercession for us and who can therefore separate us from the love of Christ, etc. See, you have to constantly keep doing that and it's a discipline. It's not easy. Faith has to be confessed.

So, one of the things that you will observe in any aspect of growing in faith – there will be an opposition. And we have to be equipped sufficiently and warned sufficiently to overcome those oppositions and to strengthen our faith. That is the reason if you remember the twelve spies, two brought the good report, ten brought the bad report and Caleb makes a very powerful statement. He says, "You know what, these giants don't be afraid of them, they will become food for us. They will be bread for us." Overcoming these giants, they will become bread for us, they will strengthen, they will become food for our inner man so that we can become strong in faith. Why do we eat? So that we have strength, so that we can surrender that strength to God, so that we can work for God. Why do we rest? So that we have a body which is well rested so that God can use it and our mind which is fresh, so that God can use this mind. So, there is an opposition to faith but when you overcome and you are sufficiently equipped to overcome these oppositions, you become more stronger when you come onto the other side. So, let us look at a few examples. Look at *Mark 10* to amplify or to accentuate this important truth that whenever you want to grow in faith, there will be an opposition. Few examples. *Mark 10*

Mark 10:46-48

⁴⁶ Now they came to Jericho. As He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging. ⁴⁷ And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁸ Then many warned him to be quiet; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

So, he wants to hold onto Jesus by faith because he knows today, this is the opportunity if I miss this opportunity I'm never going to get it back again. So, he's crying out. Immediately there was an opposition. What was that? Many warned him,

“Hey, keep quiet! Don’t disturb Him.” As Pastor was saying, people are ready to pour cold water on the fire that you already have. Many warned him and what did he do? He cried out all the more. You see that, he wants to hold on Jesus by faith. You see that there’s an opposition especially from the crowd warning him. Actually, the word for warn in the Greek actually implies, it will cost you. It’s not free. So, they had to overcome.

Again, another example. *Luke 5*. Now it happened in on a certain day as He was teaching. I love this word now. Everybody say, ‘teaching.’ Teaching, I just fell in love with that word teaching. It is very important, that is the reason why I became a teacher and eventually I’m teaching the Word of God.

Luke 5:17-19

¹⁷ Now it happened on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting by, who had come out of every town of Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was present to heal them.

¹⁸ Then behold, men brought on a bed a man who was paralyzed, whom they sought to bring in and lay before Him. ¹⁹ And when they could not find how they might bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the housetop and let him down with his bed through the tiling into the midst before Jesus.

That there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting by, who had come out of every town of Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was present to heal them.

So, wherever there is teaching, there is power of God to heal. Understand that. But then there is again opposition. ***Then behold, men brought on a bed a man who was paralyzed, whom they sought to bring in and lay before Him.*** Remember Jesus saw their faith. But how did that faith come? ***But when they could not find how they might bring him in, because of the crowd.*** There’s an opposition again. Between overcoming and coming unto the other side by faith, there is an opposition and most of the time it is the crowd. That is the reason why they could not because of the opposition. Another example Luke’s Gospel chapter 5 same chapter.

Luke 5:4-5

⁴When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, “Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.” ⁵ But Simon answered and said to Him, “Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless, at Your word I will let down the net.”

When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, “Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.” Who is this man? Carpenter. Who is He telling? A fisherman. Two different professions. But Simon answered and said. Look at this, what had stopped him? The failure, the previous night. “Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; but nevertheless, at Your word.” We have to overcome failure. One of the things I keep telling young people, even if you fail a million times. That is the last exhortation by Shibu on the way when he was dropping me to the railway station on the scooter. “Vijay, even if you fail a million times.” What a statement that was. I think I’ve exhausted million by this time, all the million times have been exhausted. “Even if you fail a million times Vijay get up, come back to Jesus.” So, failure. What if I stumble again, what if I fall, what if I make a fool of me and my God? You have to overcome that, a sense of failure. The example that we saw last Sunday. *Mark 5*

Mark 5:25-27

²⁵Now a certain woman had a flow of blood for twelve years, ²⁶ and had suffered many things from many physicians. She had spent all that she had and was no better, but rather grew worse. ²⁷ When she heard about Jesus, she came behind Him in the crowd and touched His garment

Now a certain woman had a flow of blood for twelve years, and had suffered many things from many physicians. She had spent all that she had. And what did she do? She came behind Him from the crowd. You see that? There is a crowd which is opposing. She had to overcome that. *Mark 4: 35* the same verse we saw the last time.

Mark 4:35-36

³⁵ *While He was still speaking, some came from the ruler of the synagogue's house who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?"* ³⁶ *As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not be afraid; only believe."*

³⁵ *While He was still speaking, some came from the ruler of the synagogue's house who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further.* Opposition. You know what Jesus said? **Do not be afraid only believe.** So, Jesus before He's been handed over, one of the last words that He speaks to His disciples before He's been handed over to be put to death. Very interesting, we are in the lent season. *Luke 22:31*

Luke 22:31

³¹ *And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. ³² But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren."*

And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan. Whenever you see Satan, stop. Okay. What did He ask? He asked permission for you. *He asked for you that he may sift you as wheat.* But what did I do? *I prayed for you that your faith should not fail.* And once you have returned to Me, strengthen your brothers. What did He ask for? Faith should not fail. So, let me tell you something. That means his faith could have failed unless Jesus prayed for him. So, how do we ensure that our faith will not fail us? There are several things that we learned from the Scriptures but I want to bring to your attention a few truths this morning so that you consider as to how we overcome this opposition to faith and become strong in faith and come on to the other side as overcomers.

You know in the New Testament, one of the Book that I love the most is the Acts of the Apostles. If you have seen action movies, you will like action movies because everything is happening so fast. Similarly, there is an action movie, that is the reason why it is called Acts. It is the action movie of the Holy Spirit through the Apostles. Basically, it is the Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Apostles. Things are happening at such tremendous pace. It is like page turner. You can finish the entire epistle in one sitting. It's like what's going to happen next. There is no one dull moment. It's not like Romans where you have to chew, if you lose the flow of thought, then you have to go back again. It's not like that, it's not very complicated but it's like straight. Boom! Boom! Boom! All bullet points. That is the reason why you call bullet points. All bullet points only. So, they are filled with the Holy Spirit and they preach the message, faith is generated, repentance happens. They go to another place, they preach the message, signs and wonder happen, faith is generated, then converts are added to the church and then they to another place, some people are hardened, some people believe, conversion happens. It is like full action packed. They get beat up, Paul is like stoned to death almost. They throw him out of the city but the believers come, prayed for him, he's raised from the dead. He goes back to the city preaching. Remarkable!

So, the Book of Acts if you look at it's like one of the most incredible Books. I read it in one sitting the other day and by the time I came to Acts 17 I just couldn't stop, I started praying in tongues loudly, of course thank God for the church office, so I just broke out in tongues, just to see, my goodness, it's like you're on the edge of the seat all the time. Right? How does it start. *Acts 1:1-2.* This is how it starts.

Acts 1:1-2

¹*The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, ² until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen,*

The former account I made, O Theophilus. I love that. Philus means lover. Theos means God. So, to all those people who love God, this is addressed to you. The Acts of the Apostles. How many people here are Theophilus, the lovers of God. Why am I asking you this question? The Bible says in the last days, perilous times will come because men will be lovers of self, lovers of pleasure than lovers of God. Their love for God has grown cold. And if your love for God has grown cold, this Book is addressed to you, to check truly if you are Theophilus. So, what did he do? The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach. And what is he going to do in the Book of Acts He is going to account for all the things that Jesus continued to do and continued to teach through the Apostles by the power of the Holy Spirit. Okay. ***Until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen.***

So, if you read this entire account, these are remarkable history of the church, how it started. Different context in which the Apostles or the Evangelist have been sent. How they preach the Word of God and how they got converts. Or rather how did they lead people to believe in Jesus as their Messiah. I want to just show you one sample this morning for your consideration in keeping with this thought in mind that to believe, there is an opposition and what are the things I have to take care of as a lover of God so that my faith is strengthened and I fight these battles and the oppositions of the devil towards my faith and come out victorious on the other side. I want to introduce to you one particular passage from the Acts of the Apostles. *Acts 13* I'm going to read a few verses and then I'm going to draw few lessons from this based on what we've been learning all these days. *Acts 13* let's read.

Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

So, it starts with Barnabas and ends with Saul. It's very interesting okay, it starts with Barnabas and ends with Saul and ultimately the entire Book ends with Paul and Barnabas disappears. That is the reason why the Bible says, "Many who are last will become first." So, you have to be very careful. Who's at the last? Saul.

As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

As they ministered to the Lord and fasted. Everybody say, 'fasted.' One of the ways that you strengthen your faith is by fasting. Why could we not cast them out Jesus? Because of your unbelief. However, this kind does not come except by fasting and prayer. Why were they not cast out? Because of unbelief. What is Jesus asking them to do? Fast, so that they have faith to overcome unbelief, or rather they have strength to overcome unbelief. So, they fasted. So, it's a very important exercise. Then the Holy Spirit said, and how did the Holy Spirit say? I think one person got a word of knowledge. Because those days the entire church was filled with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. One guy got the word of knowledge and another guy confirmed that word of knowledge. You want to be in a church like that. We had experiences like that in our church. February 14 of say 2008, or 2009 we had a visitation, a baptism of the Holy Spirit, we had our Pentecost. It was a second Saturday when the church used to gather in the upper room literally the upper room at the church. We had an upper room and we had a mighty visitation of the Holy Spirit and of course many of us got baptized in the Spirit and we broke out in tongues and after that we became fools for Christ. What did the Holy Spirit say, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." By this time by the way Barnabas and Saul are being used by God. They're already back from Jerusalem. They've ministered in Jerusalem and are back in Antioch. Then it goes on.

Acts 13:1-12

¹Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away. So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. ⁵ And when they arrived in Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. They also had John as their assistant. Now when they had gone through the island to Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew whose name was Bar-Jesus, ⁷ who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. This man called for Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. ⁸ But Elymas the sorcerer (for so his name is translated) withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. ⁹ Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him ¹⁰ and said, "O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? ¹¹ And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time." And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand. ¹² Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away. So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit. Who sent them? The church sent them. But how does the Scripture record? They've been sent out by the Holy Spirit. They went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. ⁵ And when they arrived in Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. They also had John as their assistant. Now when they had gone through the island to Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew whose name was Bar-Jesus, who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. Note that word intelligent man. Understand that, I like it when those details

are given. Some translations use the word a prudent man, a logical man, an intelligent man, an educated man, a logician if you will. A reasonable man. What did he do?

This man called for Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. This is what he did. He sought to hear the word of God. Let's move on, I'm still not commenting on anything. Let's read on

But Elymas the sorcerer (for so his name is translated) withstood them. What did he do? He withstood them. Already there is an opposition which you can see. One of the translations uses the word opposed them and that word is used in the context of Jannes and Jambres in *2 Timothy 3:8* these were Jannes and Jambres who opposed Moses. What did they do? They opposed the truth.

2 Timothy 3:8

Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith;

There is an opposition which is coming now. And what is his intention? ***Seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.*** You see that? There is a withstanding of the message and to turn the proconsul from the truth. This is what his intention is. Then Saul. Now, the name of Saul is going to change now. This is where actually you see recorded, Saul's name turns to Paul. Then Saul who also, "is called" is in italics. It means it's not there in the original translation. ***Then Saul who also Paul*** that means, Paul means little, Saul means big. what happened to him? ***Filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said.*** Now the words in inverted commas are Holy Spirit inspired; because I did not say that, the Word of God itself is Holy Spirit inspired. So, Luke is saying Paul full of the Holy Spirit spoke certain things. So, what he is speaking is literally something which is inspired by God and it's there therefore recorded in Scripture.

Look at how he addresses. ***O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness. Will you not cease perverting the straightway of the Lord? and now indeed the hand of the Lord is upon you and you shall be blind not seeing the sun for a time and immediately a dark mist fell on him and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand. Then the proconsul believed. So, ultimately, he believed.*** How? When he saw what was done, ***being astonished at the teaching.*** You saw that. So, what happened? The proconsul believed. So, I want to put up a simple graphic. There's a sending of the message first. The Holy Spirit sent out Barnabas and Paul. Final result is who believed. The proconsul believed. That is the final result. In the middle something is happening. From the sending of the message to the producing of faith, something is happening. What are those things? Is the question. From the sending of the message. He sent forth His Word and healed them of their diseases. Do you remember that verse from *107:20*. And who are these people? It says, "Fools because of their transgression they do all manner of iniquity and fall into sickness and they ate all kind of bread and they are in sickness and then they cry out in their sickness. So, what does God do? He sends forth His Word and He heals. So, between the sending of the message to the causing of faith, something is happening. What is that one thing. The various steps God takes us through. The voices we have to be really careful about so that when we hear, we have faith. Let's take it one step at a time.

Acts 13. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Separate unto Me," Right? So, they fasted and prayed and laid hands on them and they sent them away. So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia and from there they sailed to Cyprus. You see, in producing faith there are several things that have to happen. Let me show you in *Romans 10* this is what the Bible says in ***Romans 10. For whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*** In other words, shall be saved means, they will believe. Whoever calls, or that has believed and they have moved into salvation. Faith was produced, faith that brings Salvation is produced and they have become believers, they have become the children of God. ***How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of who they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher and how shall they preach unless they are sent as it is written.***

So, in the final act of believing there are several steps that have to happen. Several steps. What are the steps? First thing, to call upon the Lord, you need to believe. In order to believe you need to hear. In order to hear, you need preaching and a preacher and in order to have a preaching and a preacher, the preacher has to be sent. This is the process. Notice that word sent. So, the first lesson that I draw in order for faith to be produced, the kind of voices that I have to listen to voices that are sent or the preachers or the messengers of God who have been sent. Now, this is very, very critical. Let me tell you something. We can get saved through different channels okay. Some people might have read Gideon's Bible in a hotel

and they might have got saved. Some people might have read a tracts and might have got saved, some people like Augustine if I'm right, who heard two children playing with each other and said, "Tolle lege!" meaning pickup and read and he just was walking on the way and then he found a small piece of paper and he picked it up and it was Romans 13 which says, "**But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh.**" And he looked at that and suddenly the Holy Spirit hit him and he got saved.

So, coming Lord, you can come in several different ways. God has His own miraculous ways of bringing His people to Himself. But after coming into the Kingdom of God. One of the very, very important aspects that we need to understand is to come under the discipline of preaching and preachers. That is the reason why in the Book of Titus it says, "God has manifested His Word, through preaching." He says, "He chose the foolishness of preaching to save those who are lost." So, one of the very important. There is a preaching of the Word that has to happen. And these preachers you should be very sure are people who are sent. Remember some people are sent, some people just went without been sent. They just go. Those who are sent mean what, these are the people who came under authority. You remember, all these people in the church the Holy Spirit gives the Word of knowledge through somebody and what did they do, they come, they gathered Paul and Barnabas, they lay hands upon them, what was the laying on of hands signifies? It signifies people who come under the authority of the church, who have submitted themselves to the authority of the church, who have come under the authority of the leadership, who have made themselves accountable to the elders and you will see that they go, they preach the Word, they establish churches and they come back to Antioch and they gave a report of what God has done through their ministry.

So, don't hear every voice. How do we differentiate who are sent and people who are went? Let me tell you something. People who went flatter, people who are sent have authority because they are people under authority. Jesus is called the Apostle, why is He called the Apostle? Because He was sent by God. He just didn't go and therefore, when He went to the Synagogue and He preached, they were astonished because He did not teach like the Pharisees and the Scribes and He was teaching with authority and they say, "What kind of a teaching is this? Even the unclean spirits, they obey Him." You need to understand, this is very important. So, you have to be very careful. Therefore, it says in the last days you will have so many voices. How do you discern? The Bible says, "Discern the spirits." Don't take every spirit. Abstain from every appearance of evil and cling to what is good. So be very careful. Because, I'll show you examples from the Bible. *Exodus 3* for example, this is the ministry of Moses, how Moses began His ministry. *Exodus 3* at the burning bush when he is encountered by God. Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. Come now, therefore, and I will send you

Exodus 3:9-10

⁹ Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. ¹⁰ Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

That is the reason why, how was Joseph the savior of his household? Because there was a man sent by God. He was sent by God, Joseph was sent by God. Before them in chains so that he could save his household. So, listen to voices which are sent. People will come and speak so many things to you. Test that person. Is this person who's speaking into my life is a person under authority or not. Otherwise, what do you do? Close your ears. Very important. Joseph is the only guy who was under the authority of his father in his home. When he was in Potiphar's house, he submitted to the authority of Potiphar. When he was in the prison, he submitted to the authority of the warden. When he became the prince of Egypt, the second in command to Pharaoh, you know what it says? Even when he wanted to go and bring his father, he went and ask permission from the Pharaoh. That is how you discern because there are so many voices, they just go and say things, they are not people who are under authority, therefore don't listen to those voices because if you listen to those voices, it will not produce faith, it will produce fake. Jeremiah 1 look at the ministry of Jeremiah, how it starts. But the Lord said to me, do not say I'm too young, you must go therefore, to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you.

Jeremiah 1:7

⁷ But the LORD said to me, "Do not say, 'I am too young.' You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the LORD.

So, the person who is sent by God will only speak what the Lord asks him to speak. That is the reason why the Bible says, Jesus says, "I will not say anything of Myself, whatever I hear I will say. Whatever I see I will do in like manner." And that is the reason why He had authority, that is the reason why there was deliverance in His meetings, that is the reason why there was salvation in His meetings and in His teachings. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the Lord. *Ezekiel 2*, He says, "Son of man, what am I doing? I am sending you to the Israelites, to people who are rebellious nation, that has rebelled against me. They and their ancestors have been in revolt against Me to this very day. The people whom I'm sending you are an obstinate and stubborn people, say to them, this is what the Lord says."

Ezekiel 2:3-4

³And He said to me: "Son of man, I am sending you to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against Me; they and their fathers have transgressed against Me to this very day. ⁴For they are impudent and stubborn children. I am sending you to them, and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD.'

Meaning a person who is sent will be absolutely sure that he is only going to speak what God commanded him to speak. He's not going to go outside the gamete of the Word of God because it is only the preaching of the Word. How does faith come. Faith comes from hearing and hearing by the Word. The Word that is proclaimed. In the New Testament we know how the Gospel according to John starts. *In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. All thing were made by Him and there was nothing not made which was made. In Him was life and that life was the light of men and the light shines in darkness and the darkness does not overpower it.*

John 1:1-6

1In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. ⁴In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. ⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

But how do we learn about this darkness. In *John 1:6*, it says, "There was a man," what? "Sent from God. Whose name was John." This man came to bare witness of the light that all through him might believe. His believing through faith because you hear a man who is sent from God. Who is this man who is sent from God. He will not care about your feeling, he will not care about what you are thinking about the circumstance. He will tell you exactly what the Word of God is without compromising. *Jeremiah 23*. Look at the warning that Jesus gives in *Jeremiah 23:21* onwards

Jeremiah 23:21

²¹"I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.

²²But if they had stood in My counsel, and had caused My people to hear My words, then they would have turned them from their evil way and from the evil of their doings.

You see one of the things that I've seen from the life of Apostle Paul, there are certain things, some details which are mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles when you see, why did God entrust into this man so much of the truth of the New Testament? Why? Why don't you see an epistle by Barnabas, why do you see most of the epistles by Paul? Why? Did you ever wonder? I mean you can think about all the attributes and characteristics that Apostle Paul had but one of the things that stands out, let me show you an example.

This is ***Acts 15***. ***Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing." Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark.*** And why do you think Barnabas wanted to take Mark? Because Mark was his nephew. Blood is thicker than water. Spirit is thicker than everything else. Look at what it says. I mean we are not going to argue who is right. But I want to show you some very interesting details over here. The devil as they say is in the detail. Okay. But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work. So, this guy gave up in the middle and we don't want to have this guy we cannot trust. Moves on. Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. Look at this. ***And so, Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus. He just went. Look at this. But Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace***

of God. Again what? He came under authority and he was sent by the church. And what happened? ***And he went through Syria and Cilicia, what did he do? Strengthening the churches.***

Acts 15:36-41

³⁶ Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing." ³⁷ Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark. ³⁸ But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work. ³⁹ Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus; ⁴⁰ but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God. ⁴¹ And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Now I know why this man was given so much of the stewardship of the Word of God. Do you know why? A man who came under authority and who knew his place in the body of Christ notwithstanding the fact that he was a great Apostle. He always surrenders himself to the discipline of the church. Now, think about it, in the last week you would have heard several voices, how many of those voices can you absolutely, completely surely says that these voices are sent voices and not went voices? Let's move on. Why?

So, first thing, listen to voices that are sent. Listen to those people who are under authority. So, even children in your own places, wherever you study, where ever you work. Your teacher would have said something and there will be people who will say, "You know what, it's okay we don't have to listen to the teacher all the time." Whom would you listen to. You listen to the guy who says, "You know what, the teacher said this, or my supervisor said this, I will not do it because I'm a person under authority." Daddy said this I'm not going to do it. Mummy said this, I'm not going to do it. Understand. So, don't listen to people who do not have any accountability, who are hoppers and shoppers, who are not steady. You will know it from their lives, those who are not steady in their walk with the Lord. Don't listen to those voices, listen to people who will edify you. You know one of the things I have realized over a period of time. I have to be very careful what I listen to, whom I listen to and whom I should not listen to. Somethings I don't have to listen. It's not going to edify me. So, be very careful, what you will allow into your mind.

So, listen to voices or people, or people who are under authority, who are disciplined, who surrender to church discipline etc. These are very important truths that you have to understand. Otherwise, you will listen to voices and then you will just go into nothing, casualties in Christian life. So, many believers who lost the call of God in their lives because they heard other voices. They had a tremendous promise. They started off with such potential but they were just put away in the shelf because people they did not come unto authority. Isn't it interesting. Even Saul prophecies.

Remember that incident in the Bible where David is with Samuel now and Saul send people to capture him. So, when they go to the city of Rama, they all starts prophesying and the word comes back to Saul and says, "You know what everybody is prophesying. You sent them to arrest David and bring him back, everybody is prophesying," and he send the second batch. These fellows also go and they were all prophesying again. So, he , 'they are also prophesying,' and again he sends the third batch if I'm right. They also prophesied. And finally, he says, this is not working, he goes. Very interesting, he enters into the village and he starts prophesying. And what happens? He falls flat before Samuel, naked prophesying. And it says, "Is Saul also among the prophets" but this is man, it says he was a rebel. The Bible says, this is a man who is a rebel, rebellion is as a sin of witchcraft.

So, listen to voices of people who are discipline. Otherwise, you will not have faith. Be very careful whom you listen to. That is the reason why the Bible says, "Be careful as to what you listen to." Be very careful. Okay, then, let's move on to the next one.

But Elymas the sorcerer, for so was his name translated, withstood them, that means what? He opposed them. And what did he oppose? He opposed the truth. ***Seeking to turn the people or the proconsul away from the faith.***

Acts 13:8

But Elymas the sorcerer (for so his name is translated) withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.

So, there are two kinds of voices, there are voices which strengthens faith and which speaks the truth so that faith is generated and there are voices which oppose truth and lead you into unbelief. See, there are three 'Fs' in the life of faith. First, there are truths. What are these? Facts and the acts of God. The facts of God and the acts of God. So, that is when you read the Bible, you get to know the facts of God and you also get to know the acts of God. You know the knowledge and the characteristics of God and how He does things. That is the first thing. Second, that truth produces faith and ultimately what happens? This faith should empower your feelings. So, facts, faith and feelings. That is the order. So, what empowers faith is truth – the facts of God and the acts of God. So, there are voices that turn you towards God by speaking the truth into your life and there are voices which try to turn you away from God. So, you should be very careful as to which voices you are listening to. Let us look at some interesting examples from *Deuteronomy 13:1*,

Deuteronomy 13:1-3

¹“If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, ² and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, ‘Let us go after other gods’—which you have not known— ‘and let us serve them,’ ³ you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. ⁴ You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice; you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him. ⁵ But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn you away from the LORD your God

What should you do? Silence that voice. Another example.

⁶“If your brother, the son of your mother, your son or your daughter, the wife of your bosom, or your friend who is as your own soul, secretly entices you, saying, ‘Let us go and serve other gods,’ which you have not known, neither you nor your fathers, ⁷ of the gods of the people which are all around you, near to you or far off from you, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth, ⁸ you shall not consent to him or listen to him, nor shall your eye pity him, nor shall you spare him or conceal him; ⁹ but you shall surely kill him; your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people.

In other words, these voices you have to strictly deal with them. That is the reason why the *Kingdom of God advances by violence*. Here we are talking about people who speak lies into our lives. We need to silence those voices from our lives.

¹¹ So all Israel shall hear and fear, and not again do such wickedness as this among you.

¹² “If you hear someone in one of your cities, which the LORD your God gives you to dwell in, saying, ¹³ ‘Corrupt men have gone out from among you and enticed the inhabitants of their city, saying, “Let us go and serve other gods” ’—which you have not known—

There are so many voices; false prophets, flesh and blood, and some children of Belial. They come and speak into your lives, what is the whole purpose? It is to turn you away from God. Look at *2 Corinthians 6*, there is a very clear demarcation in the Bible. There are two different kinds of voices; voices whose sole source is from faith and voices whose source is from unbelief. And these two don't mix. Look at how Jesus classifies people.

2 Corinthians 6:14-16

¹⁴ Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? ¹⁵ And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? ¹⁶ And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God.

Contrast is the mother of clarity. Look at the contrast over here. First is righteous and the other is lawless. One is light and the other is darkness. One is Christ and the other is Belial. One is faith and the other is unbelief. One is the temple of God and the other is idols. And there is no connection between the two, they are absolutely separate from each other. Let me tell you something, evil company corrupts good manners or good behavior. Evil company does not change the evil manners or the evil behavior. But it rather changes the one who is good to evil. Look at the warning in *Deuteronomy*.

Deuteronomy 7:3-4

³ Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. ⁴ For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods; so the anger of the LORD will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly.

'Are you going to get married to this girl?' yes. Is she a believer? No. Then why are you marrying her? After marrying she will become a believer. No. it does not happen. Imagine a strong man is standing on a higher ground and I am standing down. The strong man will find it difficult to pull me up, but I can pull him down easily. Which is easier? To pull someone down? Or to pull them up? You may be standing on a higher ground as a believer, what are you doing? You are trying to pull this unbeliever up from a lower ground? What is going to happen? It is going to be dead weight and they will pull you down. Did you understand? The ministry of Nehemiah and Ezra are fired-up. Ezra hears that some of the Jews have mingled themselves with the unbelievers. And he is astonished; he puts his hands on his face and he weeps for several days and people comes and ask, "What did we do? Why are you weeping?" and he says, "Why did you go and get married to unbelievers?" that is Ezra's ministry.

Nehemiah's is totally different. It says that in those days some of the Jews went and married the unbelievers and their children started speaking their language and they did not know the language of the Jews but they knew the language of the unbelievers. Sometimes Christians know the names of the movies better than people of this world. What has happened? This is the truth and there are voices which take you towards the truth and they are very tough process. You see, to pull the fellow up is very, very difficult but to pull someone down is very easy. To go down is very easy, but to stand straight is very difficult. Ask a small baby.

You know in robotics we have something called as the inverted pendulum model. The pendulum usually swings from left to right and slowly, gradually comes to a standstill. But let a pendulum stand upside down, it is like balancing a stick on your palm. You move back and forth, right and left, all around to balance it and keep it from falling. Right? So this is exactly what we teach a humanoid Robot, we teach it to balance itself. One push and it will fall down. Let me tell you something, humans are the most unstable people, not monkeys, not cheetahs. Humans are very unstable. You see, babies when they are crawling on fours you are cool, but once they start walking you are very careful lest they fall. That is the reason the Bible says – *take heed, if anyone thinks that he stands lest he fall.*

So be very careful, the voices that take you towards truth and cause faith, and voices that take you away from truth.

Ecclesiastes 12:9-11

⁹ And moreover, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; I like the word 'still' why still? Let's say some people are not listening in the class, but he continued to teach notwithstanding the response, hoping that one day. I keep telling my children, "I hope one day you will go to that shelf and take the Elementary Algebra Hall and Knight by yourself and start working on it on your own, that day I know you have arrived. Till that day let me do something to create that interest in the subject." So I teach math fractions using pizzas. I still teach them even though they don't understand. So I bring a pizza, slice it into several parts. How many parts are there? I divide them into four equal part and ask, 'How many parts are there?' 4 and I take one slice and ask them, 'How much is this? One pizza divided into 4, how many parts are eaten? 1 part. So what is the fraction? $\frac{1}{4}$." Pizza is very interesting. So I teach them.

⁹ And moreover, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yes, he pondered and sought out and set in order many proverbs.

He classified. Okay this is this category. He looks at his students, this guy has absolutely no interest in math, so atleast let him finish 10th class. So what should I do to get him to finish 10th class. And this other guy he is brilliant in math so this is what I will do. So you have different classification in the class. So the teacher is already thinking about how to teach them all. I think about Ravish Kumar, the great journalist. I like him, I subscribe to his channel. I even joined to his channel because he is one of the most independent journalist in India. I'm paying him 89/- a month. So do you know what he says? "When I am writing my monologue/ news I am thinking about my audience. When I use this word I will be able to relate to this category of people. When I use this other word I will be able to reach out to this other category of people."

So what is happening is that the teacher here is thinking about his audience, he is thinking about his subjects and he is saying, 'I need to do some classification so that they will understand the Word of God. **he pondered and sought out and set in order many proverbs.**

¹⁰ **The Preacher sought to find acceptable words;** sugar coated words **and what was written was upright—words of truth.** ¹¹ **The words of the wise are like goads, and the words of scholars are like well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd. My sheep hear My voice.**

Look at the Living Translation, it is very interesting.

Ecclesiastes 12:9-11 Living Bible

⁹ **But then, because the Preacher was wise, he went on teaching the people all he knew;** I like the words 'he went on teaching the people' **and he collected proverbs and classified them.** ¹⁰ **For the Preacher was not only a wise man but a good teacher; he not only taught what he knew to the people, but taught them in an interesting manner.** ¹¹ **The wise man's words are like goads that spur to action. They nail down important truths. Students are wise who master what their teachers tell them.**

There is a guy called Khan Sir on YouTube. He is one of the YouTube sensations and he's got 2.54 million subscribers. He is supposed to be one of the best teachers in Bihar. So you should see the kind of examples that he uses. Just to ensure that he makes his class interesting he teaches surface tension by using girl's hair. So many things he uses just to make the class interesting. So what is he doing? **but taught them in an interesting manner.** ¹¹ **The wise man's words are like goads that spur to action. They nail down important truths. Students are wise who master what their teachers tell them.**

Why should we have goads to spur? It is because we are like elephants. Have you seen elephants? Huge fellow, he has tremendous potential but does he move easily? No. The man has to poke that fellow to make him move. The problem of that fellow is that he's got very good memory. That is a dangerous thing. Believers are also like that; they have a memory of all the wrongs people have done to them. They will never forget. Have you ever seen? If somebody owes you 10/- you don't forget. But if you owe somebody 100/- you forget, 'Oh no! I forgot brother, I am so sorry.' It is very easy to forget. But if someone else owe you it is very difficult to forget. So we have elephant memory in keeping a record of all the wrongs. So what does a preacher do? He uses a goad. He spurs people into action. And what is the goad for? Remember an ox, he has to go in a straight line. So what is the goad for? To keep you in that straight line.

Many of you, by the time the week is over you will be very far from that straight line, so I have to keep poking you and bring you back to that straight line again. I mean, we preachers included, we have to bring ourselves back to that straight line through our own preaching. It is very difficult for us to stay on that narrow path. It is like goads, he spurs people into action. The wise man's words are like goads, **they nail down the important truths.** You see that? It is truth that produces faith. You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free. Why? It is because it produces faith and it causes you to call out. *Anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.* But before you call out you should believe. But how do you believe unless you have heard the message.

They nail down important truths. Students are wise who master what their teachers tell them.

For example, did you hear the 22 minute sermon last night? Little HW. Some of us are very casual, 'Ah! That is our teacher, he has no other work but to keep telling us.' You know some people, honestly they come to the class as if they are doing us a favour. They will sit in the class. One of my students in the first mid-term exam he gave me a blank paper. I was like, 'What is wrong with this kid?' Second mid-sem exam, he gave me a blank paper. And final exam he gave me a blank paper. Look at this guy! How come?

Lot of us are like that, we do not do what we are supposed to do and ultimately we just draw a blank. We do not master, we do not practice. Pastor was talking about *1 Samuel 17*, you know what it says? David, he ran towards Goliath with a sling and first shot he hits a bull's eye. You think about the amount of practice he would have done to kill in the first shot. The Bible talks about the tribe of Benjamin who were all left-handers. And they could separate or split a hair by their shot. That is the reason why, *Jeremiah 4:22* says *My children, My children! My people, they do not know Me. They do not know how to do good, but they are very skilful in doing evil.* **Wise man's words are like goads, they spur people into action.**

So are you a wise student today? What do you do? ***Students are wise who master what their teachers tell them.*** Master it. Not just in your mind, but it becomes a part of your heart. So what happens when you listen to teachers who teach you the Word of God? It produces a certain kind of a person. See, ultimately you are known by what kind of fruit that you produce. So again to know the kind of fruit that you produce look at the contrast,

Acts 13:8-10

⁸ But Elymas the sorcerer (for so his name is translated) withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. ⁹ Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him ¹⁰ and said, "O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord?"

You listen to this guy you will become like this. I gave you this example, ultimately when you cook your food in the morning, let's say you ate a boiled egg, the boiled egg is on the plate first, after a while it disappears, why? It is because you ate it and ultimately what has it become? It becomes you. If you eat palak, the greens on the table. After you eat it what does it become? It becomes you. It goes into your blood stream and it becomes a part of you. So you eat palak, you eat good protein and it becomes you. You eat sweet for breakfast, sweet for lunch and sweet for dinner, what do you get? Diabetes. Ultimately what you eat becomes you. So whom you listen to is exactly what you will become. If you listen to gossip you will become gossip. If you listen to lies you become a lie. If you listen to truth and act upon you become true. That is the reason why I said, contrast is the mother of clarity. Look at the contrast here. Paul is looking at this guy and he is warning all of us, through the Holy Spirit and saying, 'Listen to the voices, if you listen to these kinds of voices this is what you are going to become. If you listen to this guy this is what you are going to become.'

First you become a pretender, for he is a man full of deceit. On the other hand you become true. Either you become pretender or you become true. The other words for pretend is hypocrite. Every time I think about Oscar awards this comes to my mind – the world's best male hypocrite. It is remarkable. And the world's best female hypocrite. Best supporting hypocrite in the male role. Best supporting hypocrite in the female role. And the director who directed all these hypocrites and the fool called the producer who put money into these hypocrites. Have you seen movies? Look at them and look at their actual lives. It is such a contrast. I am talking about people who are so decorated. When we were kids we used to spend through our nose to watch their movies. Some movies we watched, O Lord, don't even ask. How many times we watched and wasted all that money in pretense.

So what does this guy do? This guy makes you a pretender. Meaning this guy is a person who causes you to cover your sin. The Bible says that *he who covers his sin will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes will obtain mercy.* What this fellow ultimately does is that he will not cause you to access the mercy of God. He makes you a partaker of the wrath of God, on the contrary. *He who has the Son has life, but he who does not have the Son does not have life and the wrath of God abides on him.* So there is a teaching which causes you, frees you from pretense. You don't have to act. That is the reason why it says – blessed is the man whose sin is covered, whose transgression is forgiven and blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity in whose spirit there is no guile, no deceit.

So either you become true or you become a pretender. Either you have a false form of godliness and you have denied the power of God or you are genuinely true through and through. So what are you becoming? A pretender. A person who is concerned about the opinions of men. That is the reason why the Bible says, how can you believe you who seek glory from one another and does not seek the glory from the only God? He is not a Jew who is one outwardly but he is a Jew who is inwardly and circumcision is a matter of the heart and whose praise is not from men but from God. Ultimately the certificate has to come from God. Look at that statement – *Behold a true Israelite in whom there is no guile.* What a statement that it! In whom there is no guile. If God could give us that certificate for the rest of our lives I think we can retire. That is enough for us. What a certificate! I mean a certificate from God.

He tells Ezekiel, 'Ezekiel, I know your marriage. I see your marriage. Fantastic marriage. Today I am taking away the delight of your eyes.' What a certificate! Can God come and tell husbands, 'Vijay I see your wife is the delight of your eyes.' Many of us will say, 'Lord, that was once upon a time.' Think about that certificate from Moses, 'Moses is the meekest man on all the earth.' What a certificate! And who is going to write it? Moses himself. Can you imagine the person who is writing

his own certificate – ‘I am the meekest man on all the earth.’ And he is referring to himself as the third person – ‘Moses was the meekest man on all the earth.’

My dear brothers and sisters it doesn't matter what other people think. I was talking to sister Ailsa the other day, *Ecclesiastes 21:22 – you don't have to hear everything people say about you.* Otherwise you will hear your servant cursing you. And don't act very innocent either because you also cursed somebody else. When I heard that I said, ‘What a liberating truth!’ you know who told me about this? A pastor to whom I listen regularly, a Baptist preacher, a nice man of God. One day he got an SMS on his phone. The message was from one member of the church, supposed to be sent to another member of the church but it accidentally was sent to him. And he looked at it and he was shocked, ‘Is this what they think about me?’ at that moment in time the Lord told him, ‘Lot of people will say a lot of things about you. People talk, you can't stop people from talking.’ ‘Hey! Don't say anything bad about me!’ I can't stop them. Even if they say, ‘Pastor, you are the most fantastic person,’ I don't know what they will say later on. So I know several certificates they have given to me right in front of my eyes and what they have spoken about me to somebody else. I know. And the Lord said, ‘Vijay, you also are not very kosher. Do you remember what you did regarding your supervisor? You wrote emails vicariously on somebody else's behalf because you wanted to destroy his lab. So keep your mouth shut. Let people talk.’

Ultimately one day God is going to give us a certificate, a new name. It is going to be a name of the Father on their foreheads. Hallelujah! That name nobody can take. All the other people who will not agree with that name will most probably will end up in hell so it doesn't matter anyway.

So the kind of message that you listen to, either you become a pretender or you become true. And the other thing that is mentioned about this guy is that he is a person who is full of deceit and he is full of fraud. The word for fraud is very interesting. He is rude, he is careless. So one kind of teaching will keep you careless. You are careless about the things of God. The other kind of teaching makes you circumspect. So ask yourself this question today. Are you more careful about the things of God today than you were a few years back? Or are you casual about the things of God? Are you casual about the reading of the Word? Are you casual about praying? Are you casual about coming to church and listening to the sermons? What kind of an attitude do you come to church is dependent upon what you have heard through the week. It keeps you careless or makes you circumspect. That is the reason the Bible says – *the end of all things is near, therefore be sober and vigilant because of your prayers. Be circumspect, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time. Do not be drunk with wine in which there is dissipation but continuously be filled with the Holy Spirit.* How? *Speaking to one another with Psalms and Hymns and songs of worship making melody for God in your heart.* That is how you do it.

Think about it every time you meet a brother or sister, you end up with a worship service, or a prayer. That will be a fantastic encounter. That would have been a time that is well-spent. Mutual edification. That is the reason why Paul says – ‘*When I come to you I want to edify you, I want to impart something to you and not only that I want to strengthen your faith and I also want to be strengthened by your faith.*’ So be very careful; one makes you a pretender and the other makes you a true person. One keeps you careless and the other makes you circumspect. One keeps you as the son of the Devil because you are already a son of the devil because it says *you brood of vipers.* Or empowers the old man who is growing corrupt because of deceitful lusts. Or on the other hand it births Christ or produces the life of Christ inside of you, imparts the life of Christ inside of you.

So that is the reason why you need to examine yourself whether you are in the faith. Who is inside of you? Christ is inside of you. Next, are you an enemy of truth? Or do you submit to truth? A lot of people love the truth but they do not submit. Isn't it interesting, many people are very orthodox like the devil. What does the Bible say? *You believe that there is one God, so do the demons and they tremble.* I mean, whenever I hear that verse this comes into my mind. Jericho. In Jericho everybody heard what God did, every one's heart melted. But only one person took the risk and got saved. All the others trembled but they never believed. What kind of faith did they have? Demonic faith. So one person submits to truth and the other person becomes the enemy of truth.

Do you know what he says? Will you not stop making the ways of the Lord crooked? One keeps you crooked and the other way makes you upright and straight. This is the end result of listening to the voice which leads you to truth. Listening to the voice which submits to authority. So we have looked at the voices. Listen to the voice which submits to authority. Listen to the voice which leads you to truth.

Last point, what you should be.

Acts 13:6-7

⁶ Now when they had gone through the island to Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew whose name was Bar-Jesus, ⁷ who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. This man called for Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God.

Do you know how he was an intelligent man? It is because he was a humble man? How do you know? It is because he sought to hear the Word of God. He sought. He sought out Paul and Barnabas even though he was an intelligent man. Why? Being intelligent is a very dangerous attribute in the world. All people who are intelligent, most of the time, in many of the cases are the enemies of Truth; they will never submit to the truth of the Word of God. That is the reason why the Bible says, *God did not choose the wise of the world, but the foolish things of the world to confound the wise*. I will tell you why,

Matthew 11:25-27

***²⁵ At that time Jesus answered and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes*. You know what this intelligent man was going to become? He wanted to be a babe, a simple guy when it comes to the Word of God. He said, 'Lord, I want to hear. I put all my degrees aside, all my worldly accomplishments, all the talents that You have given me, everything I put aside. I want to listen to Your voice like a simple baby.' That is the reason the Bible says – *unless and until you get converted and become like this little child you will not enter into the Kingdom of God*.**

***²⁶ Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. ²⁷ All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him*.**

So do you know what he had? This vessel had a teachable spirit. He had a teachable spirit.

Matthew 11:27-30

²⁷ ...Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. ²⁸ Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

A teachable spirit. He was a wise man and he said, 'Lord, I will sit at your feet and I will listen. Whom should I teach knowledge? A person who has got a teachable spirit. *If you will diligently hear My voice*, what does it mean? A man who has got a teachable spirit, a person who will yield to the Spirit of God, who will be molded by the Spirit of God, who will submit to the authority of the Word of God, who will submit to the people whom God has placed him under. A teachable spirit. That is the reason why the Bible says in *1 Peter 5 – you younger submit yourselves to the elders. All of you clothe yourselves with humility. For God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble*. A teachable spirit. Do we have a teachable spirit today? Otherwise what happens? It will produce pretenders like Ahithophel. Full on the outside, fantastic, wise man but deep down rotten. It will produce a person who is careless about the things of God, very casual. It will not strengthen Christ inside of you. It will make you an enemy and it will keep you crooked. It is very important.

So what does Paul do? He looked at this man and said, 'You are the enemy, a man full of deceit, full of fraud, enemy of righteousness. You will never stop perverting the ways of God.' Do you know what happened after that?

Acts 13:11-12

***¹¹ And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time." And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand. ¹² Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord*.**

So three things we learn today, what kind of voices you listen to;

1. Listen to the voices who submit to authority. Voices which are surrendered.
2. Listen to the voices which lead you to truth. Voices which speak the truth.
3. Become a vessel which is teachable to the things of God.

Three Vs

- Voices which are surrendered
- Voices which speak the truth
- Vessels which are teachable

That produces faith. Otherwise in these last days so many voices. The god of this age has blinded the minds of the people. And be very careful as to what kind of voices you listen to; either they will pull you up or they will pull you down. It doesn't matter how strong you are, like Solomon very wise. How many women did he marry? 700 wives and 300 concubines. To do one circuit itself it will take him 3 years minimum @ one wife per night. 'Long time no see,' she would say. You know what happens? The Bible says that when he grew old his wives turned his heart away. Faith is of the heart. And the Bible says that he was disloyal to God and he was not fully committed to the Lord as his father David. He became disloyal because faith and faithfulness go together. That is the reason why I said, the just shall live by his loyalty. It is the same word for faithful. The Greek word pistós means faithful. 'He is a faithful fellow, a loyal fellow.' What did they do? They turned his heart away.

That is the reason why Nehemiah says, 'Don't you know what Solomon did? He married so many women, he turned the hearts of the entire nation away from God.' And Nehemiah called some people, pulled their beards and slapped them. That is the ministry of Nehemiah. But in our church we have the ministry of Ezra; we will mourn, we will pity you and when you mess up and come back we will not say, 'Didn't I tell you?' we will accept you the way you are, but we will say, 'Please don't go this route.'

I was really fired-up when pastor said there was a church where they preached the Word of God and not one man died young, nobody was sick, no one met with accidents, no one went to the hospital, all the young people stayed straight, never got into drugs, never got into bad habits, they married all kosher believing women. Can you believe a church like that? Do you know why? It is because they listened to the voices which are surrendered and they listened to voices which spurred them into action, they have vessels which were surrendered and willing to learn, who had teachable spirits. A spirit which is teachable. That is the reason why the Bible says, 'Let the righteous strike me. It shall be an anointing. And let my head not reject such an anointing.'

Many people say, 'I want anointing Lord. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit, give me anointing.' The Lord says, 'Last Sunday the pastor struck you and you did not take correction. How can I give you anointing? You don't take correction, how can I give you anointing?' The shield of Saul had no anointing. He had a shield but no anointing. He rejected the constant corrections of God. That is the reason the Bible says, 'If you continue to do the same things after being warned several times you will one day suddenly be cut off without any warning.' So be very careful and be circumspect. Be careful. I just want to reiterate these points once more, let it be in your mind. I want to expound on these but it will take a lot of time. Just keep this in mind,

- One teaching will make you righteous. The other will make you lawless.
- One teaching will make you a light. The other will take you into darkness.
- One teaching will make you like Christ. The other will make you like Belial.
- One teaching will produce faith. The other will produce unbelief.
- One teaching will make you the temple of God. The other will make you worship idols and have more idols.

Keep that in mind. This morning shall we stand up, last Sunday of this month, February. Let's turn our hearts towards God this morning.

My dear brothers and sisters, the spirit of sorcery is there in this world. This man was a sorcerer, a false prophet. And what is the essence of sorcery? The essence of sorcery is to take you away from faith. So whatever voice that you listen, which takes you away from faith is the voice of a sorcerer. It doesn't matter how good and innocent that voice seems like. The Bible says, Moses went and preached to Pharaoh. When he preached to Pharaoh and he showed him a sign, Jannes and

Jambres also came and showed a sign and they turned the heart of Pharaoh away from the truth and the Bible says that Pharaoh hardened his heart. The voice of truth causes you to soften your heart. The voice of the sorcerer causes you to harden your heart, these are subtle voices. They may not look ostensibly evil but they are voices which are subtle. It might come through flesh and blood, through well-meaning people, but they are not the voices of God.

Peter came and said to Jesus, when Jesus talked about going to the Cross, 'Lord, let it be far from You. Let it not be unto You.' And that very moment Jesus discerned and He said, 'Get thee behind Me, satan. For you are an affront unto Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God but you are mindful of the things of man.' It is the voice of sorcery from the mouth of a disciple and Jesus at that moment if He did not have the Spirit of discernment He would have commended Peter and he would have said, 'Thank you Peter for your concern.'

This morning there might be so many voices which may sound like voices of concern which only talk about the temporal securities of this world but they are not interested in your eternal security. They trap you in time, but they will not keep your eyes on eternity. They will trap you with the things of the seen and take your eyes away from the unseen. These are voices of sorcerers. Masquerading as people and children of God. So be very careful. Listen to voices which God has ordained in your life. Voices of your parents, if they are believing parents. Voices of your elders in the church who have been consistent, who have been surrendered to the counsel of God, who have surrendered to the discipline of God, people who are sent by God because they are under authority. Listen to voices which guide you to truth and spur you into action. Who are interested in the concern of the sheep and be a vessel, a vessel which is willing and surrendered. Keep these three truths in your mind.

- Voices which are sent
- Voices which lead you to truth
- Vessel which is surrendered

Closing prayer:

Father this morning, all of us surrender ourselves afresh. We need to surrender O Lord, the best we know how. Every Sunday, because Lord, through the week we listen and we read hundreds and thousands of voices, which either cause faith or the voices which cause doubt and unbelief. But this morning O Lord, I pray O Lord, Your Word says that You sanctify us and set us by the washing of the water by Your Word. I pray Father that You would cleanse us from all those evil teachings and ideas that we have taken from the world this week O Lord. Cleanse us O Lord Jesus, by the Word of God. Let the Word of God sanctify us O Lord, and let the Blood of Jesus purify us and set us apart O Lord Jesus. Let conviction come and let faith arise in each one of our hearts. For Your Word says, O Lord, that when the Holy Spirit comes He will convict the people of sin because they did not believe in You.

This morning I pray Lord Jesus that You would generate faith in all of us O Lord. And wash us from all those ideas that we have heard and submitted and surrendered to, all those things that we have heard willingly and unwillingly through the week. Sanctify us O Lord Jesus, cleanse us and purge us. O Lord, You came to Peter and washed his feet and You said, 'Peter if I don't do this you have no part in Me.' And You told Your disciples, 'You are clean because of the Word.' And I pray Father that the Word of God would cleanse us this morning. Sanctify us this morning. Let faith arise in each one of our heart. Let us be very careful as to what kind of voices we entertain in our lives O Lord. Voices which edify and not pull us down. Voices which build us up in the faith, for Your Word says O Lord, build yourself up in the most holy faith, praying in the Spirit and keep yourself in the love of God. That is what Your Word enjoins us O Lord. And this morning I pray Lord that You would cleanse us, edify us and strengthen us in our resolve. Enable us to discern the voices which speak the truth. Enable us O Lord to be willing vessels, teachable vessels who seek those voices. So even when we seek simple preachers and teachers on the internet I pray O Lord Father that You would lead us, that You would grant us the discernment and tell us what kind of voices we need to listen to. Voices which have Your sanction, voices which have Your unction, voices which have authority to deliver us. Thank You Father, thank You once again this morning. I commit all of us into Your hands. I plead the blood of Jesus over our lives and I am believing O Lord this morning that Your Word will sanctify us, set us apart. We lift up holy hands O Lord this morning, and we bless Your holy name. And we declare O Lord Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. And all God's children said, 'Amen.' Amen.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit rest and abide with each one of us. Amen.

May the Lord richly bless you.