

## Hearing God - Part Three

### The Power of a Life Soaked in Prayer

Luke 9:28-36

Today's Scripture presents what must be regarded as one of the most remarkable portraits of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He is held up to the light, as it were, and seen from several different perspectives, the way one might view a beautiful diamond from several angles. This unprecedented human being, who came into the world as the Light of the World, now shines as bright as a flash of lightning. As He converses with Moses and Elijah, who represent the Law and the Prophets respectively, we are reminded that this Jesus is the fulfilment of everything to which they looked forward. In His relation to the heavenly Father, Jesus is His unique Son, with whom the Father is well pleased and loves and has chosen. And in the face of our Lord's resplendent glory, Moses and Elijah fade from view and are gone. All of this is apparent from the text.

In this life, however, things are not always as they seem. There are cases of mistaken identity, errors in valuation, and repeated failures to see what lies beneath the surface of things. Let me give you a case in point. A self-portrait of the Dutch master Rembrandt that most experts thought was a copy has in recent years been authenticated as the real thing.

1

At the same time, another self-portrait that was always assumed to be authentic has turned out to be a fake. The discovery came to light after the two works were brought together for a Rembrandt exhibition at the Nuremburg Art Museum in Germany. There, experts applied a series of rigorous tests, including radiography and infra-red testing. They discovered that the supposed genuine Rembrandt from the Hague is actually the later work of a student. They also proved that the Rembrandt which was considered to be of dubious authenticity really is the master's own work. The discovery immediately reversed the values of the two paintings. When the announcement was made authenticating the real Rembrandt as being the portrait bearing the master's touch, it was immediately re-valued from \$100 to \$55 million!

This portrait, which had formerly been considered to be quite ordinary and of little value, was suddenly seen in an entirely new light - in its true light. The world's valuation of it changed in an instant. In reading Luke's account of the transfiguration of Christ, one cannot help getting the feeling that here, on this mountain, something similar had happened. Peter, James, and John would never look at Jesus in quite the same way again. For a few brief moments in time, something had been removed. What?

2

It was the veil with which our Lord had been cloaked ever since his incarnation. The apostle Paul, in his letter to the Philippians, spoke of the Christ, "***Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped [to be exploited], but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness***" (Phil 2:6-7). When Christ left his throne in Heaven in order to come to earth on his mission of mercy, he cloaked himself so that his divine radiance and his glory were not seen. He had the appearance of an ordinary man, a simple carpenter. But then, beginning with his baptism, then his first miracle, followed by an ever-unfolding ministry of signs and wonders, of unparalleled preaching and teaching, he began to disclose his true identity. And right here, on this Mount, the disclosure comes to a glorious climax.

The word “changed,” or “transfigured,” (as Matthew puts it) is from a Greek word from which we get our English word **metamorphosis**. For the first time in their lives they saw Jesus as He really is; not a fake or a copy, but the Son of Man who had come down from heaven bearing the signature of God Almighty Himself. No wonder John would later write, “*We beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*” (John 1:14). But now ...

3

**"Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendour, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure which he was about to bring to fulfilment in Jerusalem."**

In the Greek language in which Luke wrote this, the word translated ‘departure’ is the same word from which we get the word **exodus**! ‘Ex’ means ‘from’ or ‘out of’, and ‘hodos’ means ‘a route’, ‘a way’, or even ‘a highway’. Moses and Elijah were talking with Jesus about His coming exodus from this life, the route he would take in leaving this world - the way of the Cross!

Just as the Lord was involved in the Exodus from Egypt, so now he would be involved in a new Exodus at Calvary! Once again the Lord would be glorified, just as he was glorified by the waters of the Red Sea. Never would the glory of the Lord so brightly shine as when he would mount the Cross! The glory of the Lord is His matchless love which casts its shadow across the human landscape in the shape of a cross! Only this time, instead of the Lord looking on from heaven while Moses led the Exodus, Moses would look on from heaven while Jesus himself led the new Exodus! The cross of Calvary would be the completion and fulfilment of all that was foreshadowed and begun by the waters of the Red Sea!

4

Moses had led that old-time Exodus, freeing Israel from bondage in Egypt, leading them through the Red Sea. But on Calvary’s Cross the task of making a way of escape for all Mankind would be accomplished! Our Lord would plunge into the sea of human failure and once again divide the waters! This would be a different sort of ‘red sea’ however. It would be red with the blood of Jesus! In blazing a trail through this crimson sea of human sin and failure, Christ would open the way to the Promised Land! We have a highway to Heaven! This is what Moses and Elijah were talking to Jesus about on that mount of transfiguration.

Now as we read on in this same chapter, we see that the first thing that happened when they came down the mountain the next day was the meeting of a man whose one and only son was demon possessed. Think of it! The One and Only Son of God meets the one and only son of man in his lostness, his bondage, his torturous existence at the hand of a demon. And Jesus casts out the demon.

Jesus comes to us from the heights, down to where we are in the depths. He deals with the tragic dimensions of human existence. He slays our dragons and our demons. His way is the way of the cross, and the cross is our exodus from bondage to sin and Satan.

5

Moses was the greatest deliverer of the Old Testament, but Jesus is the Great Deliverer of All Time, for He is God Almighty, glorious in His radiance, majestic in His holiness, amazing in His grace, boundless in His love, unlimited in His power.

Now we must ask ourselves what was the source of our Lord's supernatural power? And the answer is that it was His heavenly Father! You see, this was not the first time our Lord had gone up the mountain to pray. In fact, in Jesus we see the power of a life soaked in prayer. The Scriptures repeatedly tell us that ...

*“Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.”* (Mark 1:35)

*“Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.”* (Luke 5:16)

*“Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. On reaching the place, he said to them, ‘Pray that you will not fall into temptation.’ He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, ‘Father, if You are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.’”* (Luke 22:39-42)

6

The essence of our Lord's life – the very essence of it - was His conversational relationship with His Father. When we look closely at Jesus, we see the Son walking side by side with the Father, in harmonious thought, their minds so perfectly blended as to be virtually one. Is it any wonder that our Lord said such things as:

*“My Father and I are one!”*  
(John 10:30)

*“My Father is always at work to this very day, and I, too, am working ... I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.”*  
(John 5:17-19)

*“By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.”*  
(John 5:30)

*“He who sent me is reliable, and what I have heard from him I tell the world ... I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me.”*  
(John 8:26, 28)

7

The picture that our Lord paints in his self-portrait is unmistakable. He's telling us that the whole of his earthly life consisted of hearing the Father's voice so that the words we hear Jesus speaking are the very words that He heard first from His Father. Our Lord's life was a listening life – a life soaked in prayer! Never imagine that this occasion on the Mount of Transfiguration was the first time our Lord had gone up the mountain. He had been there many times, his ear as close to heaven as possible.

That is why we find the Lord coming down the mountain in such power. *“God [the Father] was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him ... For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority”* (Col. 1:19; 2:9-10).

This Jesus, who lived in such a conversational relationship with his Father, whose life was a listening life, a life fully submitted to the Father, knew that he could not stay on the mountaintop indefinitely – and neither can we. Life simply does not consist of unending mountain-top experiences. Like Jesus, we must ascend to the heights in prayer with our ear to Heaven, but then we must descend to the plains and valleys below where people live their daily lives and wrestle with their demons.

8

When Jesus was confronted with the demonized boy he had no difficulty casting out the demon. His disciples, on the other hand, had tried unsuccessfully. They were exasperated by their failure. They were highly agitated, and we learn from Mark’s Gospel that they were actually arguing with the teachers of the law. It was a scene of pandemonium into which our Lord so authoritatively strode, and just as the Master had calmed the raging storm at sea, he now calmed the demonic storm that raged so mercilessly in the life of the lad. With a word of command, a word of authority, he rebuked the evil spirit: *“You deaf and mute spirit, I command you to come out of him and never enter him again”* (Mark 9:25). And it was done!

Now the disciples asked the Lord why they had not been able to do this, and when we combine Matthew, Mark, and Luke’s parallel accounts, we find Jesus telling them two things: (1) This kind [of demon] can be driven out only by prayer, and (2) their faith was too small. Why do you suppose that their faith was so small? Could it be that their prayer lives were also too small? Their treks up the mountain too irregular and too few? Could it be that their lives were not listening lives? Their ears not attuned to Heaven’s Voice?

9

There is a great lesson here that we simply cannot afford to miss. Notice that while Jesus says that this kind of demon can be driven out only by prayer, he does not stop to pray when confronted with the demon. Why is this? Is this not an inconsistency? Not at all. The Lord’s life has already been soaked in prayer, drenched in prayer. He has heard his Father’s voice many times and he is full of faith and bursting with power from on high. You see, there are degrees of power in speaking the word of God – and consistent, faithful, ardent and fervent prayer is necessary to heighten that power. I think we see far too few instances of those who are able to speak the word of God with authority and power today, and that is because of the generally low quality of the life of prayer. We walk onto the plains of life and into the valleys of life without first having ascended to the mountaintop in prayer. This was the disciples’ problem back then, and it is our problem today.

I know that there are many times in life when all we can do is look for a direct word or action from God Himself. And for this we must pray. But sometimes, we should be in a position to speak, to say on behalf of God and in the name of Christ how things are to be. And I believe that we are called to grow into this capacity as we drench ourselves in prayer. I’m talking about the power of a life soaked in prayer.

The power of a life lived in a conversational relationship with God; a listening life in which, like Jesus, we hear the Father and know what we are to say and do. A fully submitted life into which the Father is pleased to pour His power. We'll never be Jesus. But we are his Body! We are his hands and feet. We are his witnesses and ambassadors.

Just as Jesus came down from the prayer-mountain in power and authority, I believe that we, too, can come down from our own prayer-mountains in the power and authority of the Lord. Is this not the meaning of Paul's words when he said:

*“God [the Father] was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him ... For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority”* (Col. 1:19; 2:9-10).