

“HE STANDS AT THE DOOR AND . . . ”

HEARING HIM IN THE NIGHT

Many years ago I was awakened in the night by a voice that clearly spoke just one word—that being my name, “Jerry.” It was so clear that I awoke out of a sound sleep and sat up in bed, clearly expecting Denise to be awake and wanting to share something with me. However, Denise was sound asleep and I knew that this voice was coming from the Lord. I immediately thought of the young child Samuel when he first heard the voice of the Lord (1 Samuel 3). Although I never understood why the Lord called my name at that time, it is something that I have never forgotten. Recently, I had a similar experience in which I again was awakened in the middle of the night by the sound of a single doorbell ring (like we have in our home), and it again made me think of that time long ago when I heard my name in the night. Just as then, I knew that this sound came from “outside of myself” (not in a dream) and it was so real that I contemplated getting up and checking to see if someone was actually at our door. Yet I somehow knew that this was a supernatural event and no one would physically be there.

GETTING MY ATTENTION

Now some of you may think this above account to be a bit strange, and may question whether it was really from the Lord. However, the next day He confirmed through different means that what happened in the night was indeed Him and a way of getting my attention. You see, Denise and I have recently been crying out for a greater revelation of God in our lives and in our ministry, and have been asking Him to “open us up” to receive whatever He might want to reveal. We’ve been asking Him to “break into our lives” in a way that we might “know Him more intimately.” I believe that He uses many different ways to communicate with us, and since He knew how I would respond to the ringing of the doorbell—by connecting it to Him communicating to me—that is one means that He chose to use. But He also knew that I wouldn’t stop at that point but I would want to know what He is trying to communicate through that action. As I asked that question from my heart, I sensed that He was highlighting Rev. 3:20, “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.” (NIV)

RESPONDING TO THE INVITATION

As I pondered the above Scripture from Revelation 3:20, I asked myself, “How do I respond to this invitation? What is necessary in order for me to “open the door?” I know from the context of Jesus speaking these words to John in Revelation that He was addressing the Laodicean Church—a body of believers that had become lukewarm and really were unaware of their true condition. I also know from His words that He was inviting them to enter a place of repentance and out of that repentance He spoke of the promise of a return to an intimate fellowship—enjoying “dinner” or communing with Him. But what does repentance look like? What was He inviting them to do? What might He be inviting you and me to do?

OPENING THE DOOR . . . TO BE HEALED

I believe that one of the keys to this door rests more in the attitude of our hearts rather than our actions. Just as the Laodicean believers didn't really recognize their condition, many of us are also unaware of the true condition of our hearts. We have continued to function in life—even in our spiritual life—from a place of "surviving" rather than "living." Many of us, in response to a variety of difficult experiences over time, have learned to "cope" and end up living more from a life of resignation rather than passion and expectation. We see this often in our work with people who come to us seeking emotional and spiritual healing in their lives and in their relationships. They know that things are not right, but are not sure as to "why" and "what to do about it." The path we travel with them is quite similar to what Jesus advocated for the Laodicean believers and for us—that we allow Him to show us our "true condition" and then turn and yield what we can to Him. We acknowledge and we lead others to acknowledge that we are not strong but actually weak (2 Cor. 12). We are not whole and "all together" but rather we are "broken" and in need of healing (Ps. 51:17). We are not self-sufficient but dependent on Him. We are not capable of defending or protecting ourselves (through our own mechanisms) but we need Him to be our defense and our protector (Ps. 35:23). This, I believe, is the repentance or "change of heart" that He is speaking of in Rev. 3:20 as He "stands and waits" for our response to His invitation. It is a place of submission and an invitation for His healing presence. As John Eldredge comments on this Scripture in his book, "Waking the Dead," "There are rooms [in our hearts] we have kept locked up, places He has not had access to by our own will, and in order to experience His healing, we must also give Him permission to come in there" (p.139).

IT IS THE KINDNESS OF GOD . . .

I am grateful that it is not from a place of disdain that the Father invites us to again return to Him. It comes out of His great "kindness" towards us. In Romans 2:4 it states that it is ". . . God's kindness lead[ing] [us] toward repentance." In The Message it states it this way, ". . . In kindness He takes us firmly by the hand and leads us into a radical life-change." His heart is turned toward us and although the journey of healing and restoration is different for every person, He will continue to wait for us "at the door of our hearts" until we respond, and He will return again to that place when another season of healing and transformation is before us.

PRAYER

When I shared my doorbell experience with Denise, she shared what she had just been reading from Ken Gire's devotional book "Moments with the Savior," and it really spoke to me. Although this excerpt focuses on the birth of Jesus (Lk. 2:1-7), his prayer expresses for me the type of heart that God is seeking. I invite you to join with me in this prayer:

Dear Jesus,

Though there was no room for You in the inn, grant this day that I might make abundant room for You in my heart. Though Your own did not receive You, grant this hour that I may embrace You with open arms. Though Bethlehem overlooked You in the shuffle of the census, grant me the grace, this quiet moment, to be still and know

that You are God. You, whose only palace was a stable, whose only throne was a feeding trough, whose only robes were swaddling clothes. On my knees I confess that I am too conditioned to this world's pomp and pageantry to recognize God cooing in a manger. Forgive me. Please. And help me understand at least some of what Your birth has to teach—that divine power is not mediated through strength, but through weakness; that true greatness is not achieved through the assertion of rights, but through their release; and that even the most secular of things can be sacred when You are in their midst. And for those times when you yearn for my fellowship and stand at the door and knock, grant me a special sensitivity to the sound of that knock so I may be quick to my feet. Keep me from letting You stand out in the cold or from ever sending You away to some stable. May my heart always be warm and inviting, so that when You do knock, a worthy place will always be waiting.

From the Father's Heart,

Jerry Basel