

Key words: ear, call, complaint, cries, confession, hear

## "THE EARS OF GOD"

### Psalm 116:1-2

***"I love the LORD, because He has heard My voice and my supplications. Because He has inclined His ear to me, therefore I will call upon Him as long as I live."***

A missionary with the Wycliffe Bible Translators in New Guinea, was trying to translate the first two verses of Psalm 116 into the language of the tribal people. How to translate the expression *"inclined his ear to me"* was a difficult problem. It seemed there was no way to express those words in the dialect of the people. He pondered the problem for a long time. One day his attention was drawn to a man in the village who sat holding his son on his knees. The little boy was trying to whisper something and the father was leaning his head slightly forward.

This triggered an idea in the mind of the translator. So he asked the elderly gentleman, "What are you doing as you listen to the boy?" The man replied, "I am spreading out my ear like a blanket." The missionary had his answer. Quickly he took his pen and wrote these words as he translated the verse into the tribal dialect: *"Because he has spread out his ear like a blanket, I will talk to him as long as I live."*

How good to know that we have a heavenly Father who *"spreads out his ear like a blanket"* to hear the calls of His children! In saying that, we are using anthropomorphism (from Greek anthropos, man and morphe, form). So, to speak of "The Ears of God" is to represent Deity with a form of humanity. God has revealed Himself in terms we can understand.

What does the Bible have to say about the Ears of God? The collective verses that refer to the ears of God can be divided into three groups:

- God's Ears Refuse The Calls Of The Sinful;
- God's Ears Record The Complaints Of The Selfish;
- God's Ears Respond To The Cries Of The Saintly.

### A. GOD'S EARS REFUSE THE CALLS OF THE SINFUL

David reminds us of this sobering fact in Psalm 66:18, *"if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."*

Isaiah declared to the people of his day, *"Your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear."* (Isaiah 59:2)

Earlier the Lord had rebuked these same people by saying, *"I will hide my eyes from you; yes, when you make many prayers, I will not hear."* (Isaiah 1:11)

Again, in Ezekiel 35:7 God said, *"You shall know that I am the Lord and that I have heard all your blasphemies which you have spoken."*

Those of us who are parents will identify with the following situation: A father asked his little son to carry out some task, but the child did not want to obey. From that point on the child tried to change the subject and to divert his Dad's attention from the issue. The boy began to talk about a subject totally unrelated and acted as if nothing was wrong. He asked his Father for advice about an unrelated subject but the Father would not respond. At such times the wise Father would not hear the request of the child until the child has been obedient to his Father's previous command. To answer the request of the child is to condone the child's disobedience.

When the psalmist said, *"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me,"* he was not suggesting that the Lord is deaf and does not hear the words that are spoken to him, but rather, that he will not answer us favorably until we have repented of our sin and carried out His will. In that sense God is deaf to our petitions and prayers. As long as we regard iniquity, He refuses to regard our intercession. In that sense God's ears are closed because of our sin.

However, God does choose to hear us if we confess sin. In Daniel chapter 9 is a model prayer of confession. Daniel prays, *"Now therefore, our God, hear the prayer of Your servant, and his supplications, and for the Lord's sake cause Your face to shine on Your sanctuary, which is desolate. O my God, incline Your ear and hear; open Your eyes and see our desolations, and the city which is called by Your name; for we do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies. O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and act! Do not delay for Your own sake, my God, for Your city and Your people are called by Your name."* (Daniel 9:17-19) God is gracious to hear the confessions of the sinful.

## **B. GODS EARS RECORD THE COMPLAINTS OF THE SELFISH**

Perhaps the classic passage of Scripture where this truth is expressed most clearly is in Numbers chapter 11. Verse one says *"Now when the people complained, it displeased the LORD; for the LORD heard it, and His anger was aroused."*

His ears recorded their complaints. God had provided in a super-natural and super-abundant way for Israel. They had all that they needed. In fact, they had more than they needed. But Israel complained because of the impending dangers, sameness of diet and shortage of water instead of being thankful that they didn't get what they deserved.

They complained because they didn't have what they wanted: *"Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: "Who will give us meat to eat? We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!"* (Numbers 11:4-6)

Egypt's food had a flavor that the wilderness manna did not possess. Israel's history in the wilderness, recorded in Exodus and Numbers, reveals at least eight different times when God was displeased with his people because of their complaining.

Complaining has become the past time of many today. Some try to excuse their complaining saying they are just letting off the pressure of frustration. But when a Christian complains, he is saying that he doesn't have what he wants, and doesn't like it, and the whole thing just isn't quite fair!

Have you ever heard of the Pessimist's Creed? Here it is:

What's the use of sunshine? It only blinds your eyes.  
What's the use of knowledge? It only makes you wise.  
What's the use of smiling? It wrinkles up your face.  
What's the use of eating? Nothing to it - only taste.  
What's the use of hurrying? Haste is only waste.  
What's the use of music? Just a lot of noise.  
What's the use of loving? Only temporary joys.  
What's the use of singing? Only makes you glad.  
What's the use of goodness, when the whole world's bad?

Complaining Christians are a disgrace to those who are the recipients of grace! It is a serious indictment of one's spiritual condition. In the case of Israel, their complaining disqualified them from entering the promised land. *"And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, 'How long shall I bear with this evil congregation who complain against Me? I have heard the complaints which the children of Israel make against Me. Say to them, 'As I live,' says the LORD, 'just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will do to you: The carcasses of you who have complained against Me shall fall in this wilderness, all of you who were numbered, according to your entire number, from twenty years old and above.'" (Numbers 14:26-29)*

No wonder the apostle Paul warns us in the New Testament to take a lesson from Israel's history. After stressing their grumbling and complaining spirit, Paul says, *"These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us."* (I Corinthians 10:11)

**Illustration:** A robber went into a ritzy neighborhood with the intention of stealing a car. He looked everywhere there was making sure no one was watching. He looked to the left and saw no one, then he looked to his right and behind him and again saw no one. Then he went about his business of stealing a car. The thief approached a car parked along the curb. In a short time he opened it and was ready to start the engine when the police came and arrested him. The man inquired about the police's quick action and how they knew since he was sure no one saw him. The police told him that even though he didn't see or hear anyone, up on top of a telephone pole, there was a telephone technician repairing a telephone line. The policeman said, "The man up there heard you!" When you think no one sees or hears you, the Man up there does!

### C. GOD'S EARS RESPOND TO THE CRIES OF THE SAINTLY

Without question, the majority of verses that focus on the ears of God stress this tremendous truth. Consider these representative verses from the first few psalms:

- *"The Lord will hear when I call in to him."* (Psalm 4:3)
- *"My voice shall you hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning I will direct my prayer unto you."* (Psalm 5:3)
- *"The Lord has heard the voice of my weeping. The Lord has heard my supplication; the Lord will receive my prayer."* (Psalm 6:8-9)
- *"I have called upon you, for you will hear me, Oh God."* (Psalm 17:6)
- *"In my distress I called upon the Lord and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears."* (Psalm 18:6)
- *"The eyes of the Lord are up on the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry."* (Psalm 34:15)
- *"The Lord's ears are open to the prayer of the righteous."* (Proverbs 15:29)

Many other verses could be quoted, but the truth is clear that the ears of God respond to the cries of His children.

Sometimes our prayers are offered half-heartedly. We habitually or casually say words that we call "prayers." Sometimes we even wonder if God is listening to our petitions. But the scripture assures us again and again that the ears of the Lord are open to the prayers of the righteous.

**Illustration:** A man walking along an ocean beach asked a lifeguard this question: "How can you tell when anyone is really in need of help when there are hundreds of swimmers and waves are crashing on the beach causing a hubbub of noise? The lifeguard replied, "No matter how great the sounds of confusion may be, there has never been a time when I could not distinguish a cry of distress above all of the other noises. The voice of a person who is in trouble cuts through all of the other distracting noises. I can always tell when there was an actual emergency."

That's exactly like our heavenly Father. In all of the babble and confusion here below in this world, He never fails to hear the soul that cries out to Him for help in the midst of the breakers, storms and noises of life. James reminds us that, *"The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."* (James 5:16) God hears our every cry for help because His ears are open to the prayers of the righteous.

**Illustration:** St. Paul's Cathedral in London, has a large, domed Gallery and visitors there can hear the guide's whisper travel around the whole dome, the sound bouncing back many times from the smooth walls. If you put your ear close to the wall, you can hear what is said on the opposite side of the dome, even though it may be said in the lowest tones. The acoustics are extraordinary.

A number of years ago, a poor shoemaker and his lady lover were visiting the Gallery. He whispered to his young lady friend that he could not afford to marry her because he did not have enough money to buy any leather from which to make shoes and therefore his business was ruined.

The poor girl wept quietly as she listened to this sad news. On the other side of the gallery, there was a gentleman 198 feet away, who heard the poor shoemaker explaining to the lady whom he loved, that he would have to call off the wedding. The visitor who heard the couple talking in hushed tones, followed the shoemaker when he left and located where he lived. He then had a generous supply of leather secretly sent to the shoemaker's shop. Imagine how delighted the poor man was! His business prospered and he was able to marry the girl of his dreams. It was not until a few years later that he learned the name of his benefactor. It was Mr. W. E. Gladstone, the Prime Minister of England.

It is good if we go through life without any trouble, but there is always One above who hears our whispered sorrows and will take action, as Mr. Gladstone did. No matter how softly we whisper - we need, in fact, only to think and He will hear. That is to say, we cannot always tell our human friends about things, but there is One Who always knows, so we can tell Him in prayer audible or inaudible and He will hear and answer!

And remember this:

***"Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."*** (Rom.10:13)