

UNIT 1.D.: HEARING GOD'S VOICE

CAN GOD REVEAL HIMSELF TO AN UNHOLY MIND?

God wishes to pierce the veil that separates us from him, and there are times when he even chooses to speak to those immersed in sin. Think of Paul on the road to Damascus or Alma 2's encounter with an angel. However, God is holy and we are unclean as the prophet realized in Isaiah 6:5:

Then said I, Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.

This is the same realization we've all have had at one time or another. **We feel a sense of our own sinful nature and our inability to approach God seeking a direct manifestation of his power and glory.** As we grow in our understanding about God, it's common to recognize the distance that really exists between us and a holy God. Don't let that discourage you from trying to make that connection with God. Recognizing his holiness and our own sinfulness can inspire us to worship his attributes even more intensely and increase our desire to be more like him.

In Genesis 7:42 God told Enoch, "Behold, I am God; **Man of Holiness** is my name . . ." No unclean thing can enter the kingdom. If we wish to enter into his presence, we must be washed clean through the atoning sacrifice of Christ and then our lives must begin to evince a change in thought life, in our words and actions.

God is available to us in our private worship (e.g., our personal devotions at home). He wants to make himself accessible to us in that setting. In corporate worship, God has blessed us with the gift of priesthood authority to bring us into God's presence as the body of Christ. **In our corporate worship it is the responsibility of priesthood to bring a sanctified people before a holy God that they might be able to pull back the curtain that separates God and man.** To do this we are all called to be a *sanctified* people.

D & C 1:5f:

. . . for I the Lord cannot look upon **sin** with the least degree of allowance.

I Peter 1:16:

Be ye holy; for I am **holy**.

Psalm 24:3-4:

Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in his holy place? **He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart;** who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

Mormon 4:94:

Be wise in the days of your probation; **strip yourselves of all uncleanness;** ask not, that ye may consume it on your lusts, but **ask with a firmness unshaken, that ye will yield to no temptation, but that ye will serve the true and living God.**

Helaman 3:7:

Then were his people easy to be entreated, **firm to keep the commandments of God, and slow to be led to do iniquity;** and they were quick to hearken unto the words of the Lord.

3 Nephi 3:16:

And they would not depart from it, for they were **firm, and steadfast, and immovable**, willing with all diligence to keep the commandments of the Lord.

3 Nephi 4:2:

And there was not any man who could do a miracle in the name of Jesus, save he were **cleansed every whit from his iniquity**.

Matthew 5:10:

And blessed are all the **pure** in heart; for **they shall see God**.

1 Peter 1:22:

Seeing ye have **purified** your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto **unfeigned love** of the brethren, see that ye **love one another with a pure heart fervently**.

We live in a world that is in direct conflict with the objectives of God who is holy, but he will not endure the least degree of sin. If I want to enjoy the fullness of his presence, I must be cleansed of every vestige of sin that still resides in my life. I must remove any sinful desires or influences. For example:

- I must earn a living from the world, but I cannot succumb to its influences and compromise God's principles.
- Perhaps I worship in a congregation where the gifts of the Spirit are not clearly evident, but I cannot allow that to discourage me from seeking to know God's mind and will.
- I might have a spouse or children who do not share my vision of the kingdom, but I cannot allow that to injure my relationship with a holy God.

I need to always be aware that my relationship with God is tenuous. Imagine that it hangs by a delicate thread. Think of this thread as the Holy Spirit. The weight of my sin is enough to gradually unravel that thread. The least sin in my life is enough to damage that connection with him. We should constantly be aware how vulnerable that connection to God is.

With this understanding in mind, is it possible in this life to reduce the distance between my sinful self and a holy God? Yes, it is! We all struggle with this issue. Is the answer to be self-punishing, to beat ourselves down mentally? No, it's not. That is exactly what the forces of evil would have us do. Instead, we must place our trust in a loving God to close that gap between our own sinful condition and his holiness. He made us with weaknesses; he wants us to be dependent on him.

2 Nephi 3:29-66 (Nephi's psalm):

Nephi had the mind of Christ (e.g., the gift of the Holy Spirit dwelling within him) and he was therefore able to **"delight in the scriptures."**

- Meditation: Nephi's heart meditated on the scriptures.
- Writing: Nephi wrote the scriptures for others' benefit.
- Delight: Nephi took great pleasure in the things of the Lord.
- Prophecy: Nephi pondered the revelations he had seen and heard.

For **my soul delighteth in the scriptures**, and my heart pondereth them, and writeth them for the learning and the profit of my children. Behold, **my soul delighteth in the things of the Lord**; and my heart pondereth continually upon the things which I have seen and heard.

With this meditation and study, Nephi came to realize there was a wide disparity between himself and God. “His flesh” or “his iniquities” or, in other words, “his sins” caused his heart to groan because **they separated him from a holy God.**

Nevertheless, the great goodness of the Lord, in showing me his great and marvelous works, my heart exclaimeth, O wretched man that I am; yea, my heart sorroweth because of my flesh. **My soul grieveth because of mine iniquities. I am encompassed about because of the temptations and the sins which doth so easily beset me.** And when I desire to rejoice, my heart groaneth because of my sins.

In delighting in the scriptures, Nephi gained the insight that God in his condescension (deserving glory but lowering himself instead) had poured out abundant mercy upon Nephi and blessed him despite his own unworthiness. **This caused Nephi to “wax bold in mighty prayer” that God might lift him from the mire of sin:**

- Why should my heart weep?
- Why should I linger in the valley of sorrow?
- Why should I yield to sin because of my flesh?
- Why should I give way to temptations?

This is the very same struggle that every believer experiences. We all want to be free of the sins that so easily beset us. To do this, Nephi had to trust in a power greater than himself. Trusting in our own strength will never get us there. It is only by a miracle and a power outside ourselves that we will ever come to “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13 and Matthew 5:50). It is only by God’s grace that we will ever have the “desire and power to do his will” (1 Corinthians 15:10 and Jacob 3:8).

Nevertheless, **I know in whom I have trusted.** My God hath been my support; he hath led me through mine afflictions . . . And **by day have I waxed bold in mighty prayer** before him . . . **O then, if I have seen so great things; if the Lord in his condescension unto the children of men, hath visited me in so much mercy, why should my heart weep, and my soul linger in the valley of sorrow . . . And why should I yield to sin, because of my flesh? Yea, why should I give way to temptations . . .**

In verse 46 of Nephi’s psalm we see a turning point where he is resolved to be a victorious Christian who wants to know the liberty that comes with living in moral purity. It’s at this point that Nephi asks God, **“Wilt thou make me that I may shake at the appearance of sin?”**

Awake, my soul! No longer droop in sin. Rejoice, O my heart, and give place no more for the enemy of my soul . . . Rejoice, O my heart, and cry unto the Lord, and say, O Lord, I will praise thee forever, my soul will rejoice in thee, my God, and the rock of my salvation . . . **Wilt thou make me that I may shake at the appearance of sin?** . . . therefore I will lift up my voice unto thee; yea, I will cry unto thee, my God, the rock of my righteousness. Behold, my voice shall forever ascend up unto thee, my rock and mine everlasting God. Amen.

If Nephi lived today, he would probably never turn on a television. He probably would never aimlessly scroll through a streaming device. He may or may not make very limited use of a browser. He wouldn’t listen to comedies with raunchy, unwelcome humor. He would not expose himself to movies designed to cause their audience to succumb to increasing degrees of filth. Perhaps he wouldn’t even attempt to lead a boycott to overturn all of this debauchery. **For him personally, it’s possible that he would resolutely and unhesitatingly close all these channels of communication like an iron door, never to be opened again!**

Becoming a Disciple of Christ

If we were to guess, **Nephi's joy would not be found in** plays, movies, sporting events, television, extravagant vacations, beautiful clothes, elaborate homes, fancy cars, sumptuous meals at exclusive restaurants, achieving massive profits on the stock exchange, hobnobbing with celebrities or beautiful people. He would probably see these as vacuous activities that do not bring lasting happiness.

Instead, Nephi would probably go out on the street and look for someone who is suffering. "Suffering from what?," you might ask. Perhaps he'd tell that person, "I know a cure, I have an answer, I have a fix for that." We would imagine that he might know how to use the power of Jesus Christ to heal every spiritual and physical wound in this world. **When he found someone suffering, his joy would come in telling someone, "I have a cure for that; Jesus is the answer!" The joy in knowing that simple truth would be immeasurably greater than anything this world has to offer!**

To some degree, this is what it means to become disciples of Christ and a sanctified people. As his grace molds us into people who will not return again to the old pattern of sin, there will begin to be **power** to live as victorious Christians in true freedom!

We have entered this commentary on Nephi's psalm in more than one of these modules because it's extremely important to those on a quest to become "disciples" learning to arrive at **"the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ"** (Ephesians 4:13).