

# **VOICES**

## **BY**

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In each of our lives there are voices calling to us; demanding our attention, competing for our interests, luring our affections. These voices come from within and without. They are everywhere—in the city and country, among the rich and poor, the educated and uneducated, the young and old. Relentlessly they tug and pull at us, compelling us to follow, to yield to their desires, to love what they love and hate what they hate. The voices of the past haunt us with regrets, stir up past offences, consume us with despair, fill us with pride or awaken deep desires. The voices of the present battle for our attention, our affections, our very lives. Whether good or evil, from heaven or hell, these voices yearn to shape our present, future and eternity. They are a reality we must deal with.

The voices within are our thoughts, emotions, desires, hurts, joys, and conscience. They are the byproduct of our personal history that has shaped our character and determined our destiny. The voices from without are the social influences of family, friends, school, career, religion, TV, music and more. We can willfully silence many of these voices. With others we are forced to listen. Nevertheless, whatever enters into us will mold us into the people we are and will be.

In the end, all these voices, both internal and external are rooted in spiritual realities. They either come from Satan and his worldly kingdom or from God and the kingdom of heaven. The spiritual prince of this world is Satan (2 Cor. 4:14). He fluently speaks our language and knows how to manipulate our desires, emotions and intellect. He can whisper in our ears, speak through men (Mt. 16:23), and use our kingdoms, inventions, intellect and passions to advance his wicked schemes. Though he offers freedom, he makes men slaves to sin in all of its hideous forms. His is the voice of pain, suffering and damnation.

The ultimate voice of authority is God. His voice can pierce the thickest darkness and penetrate the hardest heart. Heaven and earth tremble when He speaks but a whisper. Creation will be remade when He roars. Life is in His words and healing in His touch. He is the only lasting answer to our problems.

Far too often, when the Almighty speaks, we choose not to listen or selectively hear what we want. What causes us to ignore God's voice and yet be in tune with the voices of this world? We have immersed ourselves in the language and love of this world—what they are we have become.

### **LONGINGS OF THE HEART**

Imagine how terrifying it was for Lot and his family to flee Sodom (Gen. 19). Warned by two angels that the godless city would be divinely destroyed they reluctantly fled to the mountains. Before leaving the angels warned them not to look back, but ahead to their deliverance.

Mrs. Lot would not have agreed with most of Sodom's sinful practices. Nonetheless, Sodom had supplied her with those possessions that became so precious to her. It also had a culture that freely allowed her to pursue the love of pleasure she had come to expect out of life. Without realizing it her constant association with the world had caused her to grow numb to its wicked environment. In her mind the loss of her beloved worldly lifestyle was more than she could bear, more important than even Sodom's destruction. So Mrs. Lot looked back with longing desire and judgment came on her too. That is why Jesus commanded us to "Remember Lot's wife" so we would not suffer her same fate (Lk. 17:32).

As Mrs. Lot fled the voices of Sodom called out to her: "Why are you fleeing? Sodom is not that evil. Hasn't God prospered her? She will not be destroyed. You can serve God and enjoy the pleasures of Sodom too. If you leave you will surely suffer. Consider all that you will lose." Her ears were in tune with the voices she loved. When she hearkened to those lying voices she received the reward of what they truly have to offer—death.

The question must be asked: are we the spiritual citizens of Sodom or of heaven? If we yield to the voices of Sodom, which is an emblem of wickedness and worldliness, we will be formed into worldly people whether-or-not we call ourselves Christians. Those who are molded by this world have their minds and hearts set on worldly things because they have become "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God" (2 Tim. 3:4).

Worldly minded people live for the moment, for the satisfying of their desires, lusts and pride. They do not want to be burdened with Biblical Christianity that demands their entire abandonment. Many will accept a watered-down version of the Gospel that does not upset their selfish way of life even though it is powerless to save. Their love self and sin has blinded their hearts and minds to the temporal and eternal consequences of worldliness and compromise.

## **THERE IS VICTORY**

We cannot overcome our natural propensity to worldliness by just claiming to be Christian or attending a local church. True citizens of heaven have heard God's voice commanding them to flee Sodom and not look back. Through loving obedience they have broken Sodom's control over their lives by setting their "minds on things above, not on earthly things" (Col. 3:2). Like Paul, they have counted this world as dung "compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:8).

We will never be victorious Christians as long as our minds are fixed on the passions and pursuits of earthly things. Worldly thoughts are the result of worldly hearts, for whatever our hearts love our minds will dwell upon. Jesus taught that, "out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft,

false testimony, slander” (Mt. 15:19). Our lifestyles are worldly and self-centered because we love ourselves and this world more than God.

To change our thoughts we must have a radical change of heart. We are commanded to set our “hearts on things above” (Col. 3:1). If our hearts are consumed with Jesus there will be no room for worldly loves. God has promised to give His people a new heart and mind if we will thoroughly repent of our sins (Ezk. 36:26). True repentance incorporates the turning from our sin and our absolute surrender to God. We are then to zealously pursue God in everything we say and do until our dying day.

We have believed the lies of a multitude of voices that have told us happiness and purpose comes through the pursuit of pleasure and possessions. As a result, many professing Christians are willful captives of Satan and are now slaves of Sodom through their passions, lusts, greed and pride. Its time we silence in our hearts and minds these evil, lying voices, for they have done us great harm.

Jesus taught us to aggressively deal with our sins by cutting them off (Mk. 9:47). We must have the courage and honesty to examine our lives by God’s Word so we can comprehend how our worldliness has offended a holy God and hurt our family and friends. Only then will we truly repent of our sins.

This is war in the inward parts of man. The heart and mind is the battlefield for the soul. Whoever possesses the heart will control the mind and own the soul. It is our choice who possesses the deed to our souls, whether it is God or Satan. There is no middle ground, no demilitarized zone and no place for compromise.

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