

*Revelation 2:7 He that hath an ear, let him hear
what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*

SPIRITUAL EARS

Brother Emerson A. Wilson

"Blessed Are Your Ears"

John closes each letter with this exhortation, and it is a wonderful and great privilege to be able to have an ear to hear what the Spirit saith. It is sad to say, but too many people do not have a spiritual ear. Because of this, we have many problems, existing in many ways.

We read in 1 Corinthians 2:9-10: ". . . Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." Jesus told His disciples: ". . . blessed are . . . your ears, for they hear [or you are able to understand what you hear]. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to . . . hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them" (Matthew 13:16-17).

When you possess the Holy Spirit and He possesses you, you have an ear to hear, or an ear of understanding. You have an ear which is blessed beyond kings, potentates, and all the high authorities of the earth. It doesn't make any difference whether your IQ is high or low, you can have an ear to hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

John ended every one of the seven letters to the churches by saying, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Why all the repeat? First of all, in all of God's dealings, you can trace a design, purpose, and

plan. Nothing is unnecessary; nothing is just stuck in to fill up the gap.

Consider the very world in which we live, the size and the orbit of each planet. The scientists are finding out what great design and plan God used in designing the planets, and also the design, shape, and structure that went into the creation of every insect, to the least fly that flies with the wing. According to aeronautical engineering there is no way in the world a bumblebee can fly, because it doesn't have enough wingspread; but there are some things that the engineers don't understand yet. That bumblebee doesn't realize this, so he flies right on.

God has a design for every verse in the Bible. There is a design for every repetition in the Bible, and there is a meaning here which we are intended to observe. The repetition we are dealing with is, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." As it was then, so it is now. The thing that brought the falling away in the morning time was their refusing to hear what the Spirit said. Instead, they were hearing what the flesh said, what the ministry said, or what the so-called church said.

The modern church is speaking with authority yet today. Our governmental powers are recognizing what the church says along a lot of lines, which is going to get you and me in trouble if we stand for the truth. It will get us in trouble, because what the so-called church is saying is contrary to what the Spirit says. All through Jesus' words and

through the Acts of the Apostles, we are warned to beware of men. In every circumstance, there were men rising up right within the church who were speaking perverse things and leading away disciples after themselves.

The greatest need we have is for people to get a spiritual ear and then hear, heed, and obey what the Spirit saith. The Holy Ghost will never tell anyone to do anything contrary to the principles of the Word. Never, never! I know we have religious movements where people are saying, "The Holy Ghost said to do this," even to killing their mother-in-law. But brother, the Holy Ghost will never tell you to do anything contrary to the principles of His Word. He wrote the Word; this is His Word, and we have guidelines to go by.

Our Safeguard

There are too many people living on the surface; there is not enough depth to people's religion. It is too simple and easy, when a confusing issue comes up, to seek some man's opinion instead of spending some time with God, fasting and praying, to see what the Spirit says. Usually, the further we go with opinions, the further we get away from what the Spirit is saying. If everybody would do what the Holy Spirit told him to do, if everyone would hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches, what a wonderful time we would have.

We live in the greatest day of education; we have commentaries, comments, and translations of every

kind. We have information coming to us from all angles about the Bible. There never was a day of so many voices presenting so many ways and so many interpretations. In the midst of it all, God is saying to man, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

One of the great temptations the church has always had is trying to finish in the flesh what was started in the Spirit. Every falling away that the church ever went through was an active working of that same temptation. The devil has used it on the church again and again, causing her to try to finish in the flesh what was started by the Spirit.

It took the Holy Ghost to bring the church into being and into action. She did not have a message to preach until the Holy Ghost gave it to her. Even as she did not have a message, she did not have the power to preach it, only through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Word of God lets us know that all the promises to the church, every promise for enlightenment, encouragement, comfort, help, power, or greater ability, was to come through the Holy Spirit. Church of God, you know this well, but let our pure minds be stirred to remembrance of these things.

Before Jesus left, He spent time instructing His disciples. If there was any one point He wanted to nail down, it was this: "... without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). Without the Holy Ghost, you cannot have Him. He said in John 16:13-14: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." He taught them to wait until they were endued with power from on high (Luke 24:49). They would receive power after that the Holy Ghost would come upon them (Acts 1:8). Human talents, efforts, and

abilities cannot work without the power of the Holy Ghost. Church of God, we are failing, failing, failing because we have looked too much to the human.

Saints of God, the Holy Ghost is the church's safeguard. Without Him, any of us can go into deception. Never rest in the fact that you have been around for years, and that you could never be moved. The only safeguard we have against antichrist, against false doctrine, or against seducing spirits is hearing what the Spirit saith.

You don't have to let too much rubbish get in your life until you become hard of hearing so that you can't hear what the Spirit says. One night when I was down in Kentucky holding a meeting, a little old woman went to shouting on the first song. She shouted until her long hair fell down. Every little bit she would stop and say, "Children, the Lord has been talking to me today." Well, anyone could see that. After she said that two or three times, she stopped and said, "And He will talk to you if you have clean ears." "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

The Holy Spirit is our only safeguard against antichrist spirits. John deals with antichrists in 1 John, the second chapter, starting with verse eighteen. An antichrist is not some man altogether. Antichrist can be any teachings, traditions, or ideas that are contrary to Christ and truth. And for every antichrist, there is a false prophet to declare those teachings.

Individuality

After dealing with who an antichrist is, he tells us in verses 26-27 why he is writing this chapter: "These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it

hath taught you, ye shall abide in him."

Brother, you cannot abide in Christ and overstep what the Holy Spirit says to you. God fixed and settled a safeguard. He knew in every era of time that there would be preachers who would go wrong, so He fixed it so that every saint could have the anointed one, the Holy Spirit, abiding right in his life. We thank God for pastors, teachers and evangelists, but after they have done all their teaching, you have the Holy Spirit right down inside that lets you know whether or no it is truth. The Holy Spirit speaks to you individually.

He said in Revelation 2:7a, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." The Spirit is saying something here to all the churches. He is no talking about all the man-made religions; he is talking about all the different congregations or localities of the church. The Spirit is saying something here that every church everywhere needs. It is written to all the churches. Brother, if people will give heed to what the Spirit of God says, it will work unity among the congregations no matter when they are, on any side of the world.

Now, even though it is addressed to the churches, each individual must hear for himself. Saints, never tie your faith on any preacher's shirttail. Your preacher is not going to be there when you go to the judgment. Even though the letter is written to the churches, every individual is responsible to hear for himself. The Scripture text says, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Verse 7 holds a promise "To him that overcometh . . ." The congregation you attend may go down, perish, and fall away, but if you will hear what the Spirit saith, you can stand. God fixed it and settled it this way.

If people will listen to the Spirit we will have the greatest unity; we will have the unity for which Jesus prayed. The Holy Ghost is not tel-

ing us a dozen different things. When God converts you and give you the Holy Spirit and spiritual understanding, He does it for on reason: so you can hear what the Spirit saith. Hearing what the Spirit saith will bring an end to much confusion among the brethren.

The morning-time church spake as the Spirit gave them utterance. We would do well to learn to keep our mouths shut unless the Spirit leads us to speak. If you have not heard anything from the Spirit, then you have nothing to say. What do we do, brethren, if we are preachers and it is time to preach? If we don't hear what the Spirit says to us, the people are not going to hear what the Spirit says to them. Hearing what the Spirit saith will put an end to much confusion. I am confident of that. We can just move on our own, bring forth what we feel is best for the circumstances, and miss it a long way.

Christ's Reign

Let us consider one of the greatest confusions out here in the religious world. We have millenniums of every kind, and some people are so confused about it that they don't even want to talk about the kingdom. They know it is a bone of contention, but if you have an ear to hear what the Spirit saith, you will not have any trouble with the kingdom.

Let's read Acts 2:4, "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Brother, when they spake as the Spirit gave them utterance, they spake things they had never understood before. It was very clear to them, however, in Acts 2:29-30: "[Peter speaking] Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of

his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne."

Here we understand when Christ actually took David's throne. The Jews are sending millions of dollars back to Palestine. Religious leaders, supposedly holiness people, are sending thousands and millions back. They are expecting anytime for the plan to come up to build a great temple in Palestine; they are expecting Christ to come back to the earth and sit on David's throne. Peter here was speaking as the Spirit gave him utterance.

Verses 32-361 tell us: "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord [Jesus Christ], Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." Christ does not sit on David's throne forever. The kingdom is the kingdom of God, not the kingdom of Christ. God has just given Him power and authority to sit on the throne until He makes His enemies His footstool. He is sitting there right now.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:25, "For he must reign, till [there is an end to Christ's reign] he hath put all enemies under his feet." The last enemy to be destroyed is death. How long is He going to reign? Until He destroys the last enemy, death, and it already has had its sting removed. For the Christian, death already has been defeated. Death cannot hold the cold darkness over the people that it once did. Since Jesus came, died, and rose again, He took the sting out of death. He broke death's power. It is still among us, but when He appears again, it will be destroyed.

That will be the end of it. That will be the last enemy to be destroyed, and Christ must reign until that last enemy is destroyed.

Past, Present, Future

I believe one reason for confusion is because people fail to understand that there are various stages of development of the kingdom of God. When they think of a kingdom, they think of something fully developed, fully settled, and in full operation, but the Bible does not teach the kingdom of God that way. We are living in the present stage of the kingdom, where our Lord is subduing evil through the grace of His Word and the power of His Holy Spirit. He is putting His enemies under His feet right now; that is the stage we are in. The next stage will be when, thank God, He has put all enemies under His feet. And, as the Bible reveals, the third stage of the kingdom will be that heavenly stage.

Let's read 1 Corinthians 15:24, "Then cometh the end, when he shall have [past tense] delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power." The end of this world is not going to bring a time when Christ comes and puts down the enemy. He is putting down the enemies right now. Before the end comes, He will have put down all the enemies, except death, and when He appears the second time, He will put death down. It will be destroyed forever and ever.

Friend, this "Jesus only" business doesn't work. God has power over Jesus. Jesus' power to reign was designated by the Father. When the end comes, He is going to turn the kingdom back to the Father, and the Father will reign forever and ever. Verse 28 tells us, "And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may, be, all in all."

Jesus is not coming to set up a kingdom. He was given all power and authority when He rose from the dead and went to sit at the Father's right hand. He took His place on David's throne and right now, through the power of His Word and Spirit, He is putting all things under His feet, destroying enemies: Through the Word and the Spirit the enemies were, and still are, being put under the church's feet, and she is able to walk right on. Whatever the enemy lays ahead of the church yet today, we will be able to put under our feet if we will obey God and overcome as He has ordained.

Power Over the Nations

In Revelation 2, verses 26-27 tell us: "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father." Not only did Jesus receive all power so that He could rule over all nations and all the powers, but if you will keep His works to the end, He will give you power over the nations. They could no more stand against you than a vessel made of clay could stand against an iron rod beating on it. Church of God, we are living beneath our privileges.

In every one of those seven letters to the churches, the first thing He said was, "I know thy works," and for every one of their works, they were not keeping His works. We read in verse 26, "And he that . . . keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations." This was a quote from the 2nd Psalm, verses 8-9: "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

What was John talking about when he said that we will have

power over the nations? If you will hear what the Spirit saith, God will give you power that no nation anywhere can withstand. It does not make any difference if you go to the uttermost parts of the earth, you can preach the Gospel with power and authority that will break down the hardest people and subdue them. I have seen the voodooos in Haiti break down, weep, and find salvation under the power of the Gospel. That power is lacking today. We cannot even move the American public as we ought. Because we lack that power, He said He would give us over to the nations; we therefore have turned to schemes and ideas, trying to win the world this way or that way.

On the other hand, if you will hear what the Spirit saith, He will give you power over the nations. God will anoint you with power so that you can break, the hardest case. Man will not be able to stand up against the certain sounding forth of God's Word. When God gives you this power, there is no power in any nation, no matter what it is, that can stand up against you. The Holy Spirit is not dead; He is still talking. Sometimes the flesh or people's opinions are so strong that we can't begin to find out what we are supposed to do. But friend, if you have spiritual ears, the Holy Ghost will speak to you; and if you will hear what the Spirit saith, God will give you His power. That word *hear* means "heed." We can read that verse like this: "He that hath an ear, let him heed what the Spirit saith." You can disagree with me, but this is the source of any Christian's victory. It is the source of victory of any congregation of the Church of God in any location.

God wants us to quit this stumbling around like a blind horse, playing a hit-and-miss game. If you will hear what the Spirit saith, it will work. He is still speaking. There is not a doubt in my mind but that the sweet, still voice of the Holy Spirit is speaking, calling certain people to certain locations for a cer-

tain work. Our greatest need is hearing and heeding the Holy Spirit. If people will give an ear and listen to Him, He can straighten out every one of our problems. He can give us that power over the nations which God knows we need in a greater way. Do not forget that there was no church until the Spirit spoke, and there will be no church today unless the Spirit speaks. Whenever people cease to hear what the Spirit saith, we just become another form of religion.

Works Are Important

The Spirit says to everyone, "I know your works." Hypocrisy is a waste of time. We are in a day when the best actors are not in Hollywood, but the Spirit is not fooled at all. The Spirit says to every one of us, "I know your works."

The works of a professing Christian are of great importance. We realize that works cannot save you. Ephesians 2:8 says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." Works cannot justify you; works will not cleanse you from sin, but this does not say they are of no importance. I receive pamphlets from certain religions which put works clear out of the picture. The thing, however, which put people in or out in these seven letters was their works. He did not say, "I know your profession" or "I know your faith." No, He just hit the nail right on the head: "I know your works," because faith without works is dead (James 2:17). I do not have a bit more faith than I can work.

The works of a professing Christian are of great importance; they are evidence of his religion (James 2:21-26). You do not talk about having faith unless you can show it with your works. In Titus 1:16, Paul points out how you can know an antichrist and how you can know a hypocrite: "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him . . ." It avails you nothing to profess to know God if in works

you deny Him. Jesus said in Luke 6:44a that "every tree is known by his own fruit."

Proverbs 15:3 says, "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." Jesus knows your works. You have never done anything, no matter how private it was, that Jesus did not see. You have never spoken a word, even in a whisper, but what He heard it. You have never written a letter, but what He read it. He is familiar with your very thoughts. There is no darkness to Him; all things are open and manifest to Him.

Friend, He knows all the works of the unbelieving today. Contrary to the teaching of annihilation, there will be a day when the evil ones are punished forever and ever in the lake of fire. The One who says, "I know your works" is the same One who tells us that the wicked will be judged according to their works (2 Corinthians 5:10).

The Lord knows the works of His own people, and He weighs them. Someday, thank God, He will reward them. He never overlooks a word, an encouraging effort, or any deed that is done to His glory. Paul, writing to the church at Corinth, said, "... every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour" (1 Corinthians 3:8). The Bible says, "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven..." (Matthew 6:20). Never get the idea that, you can sit around and let someone else do your work in the kingdom of God and still enjoy the treasures of Heaven as he does. No, there is a just God who is keeping account. We will be judged according to our own labor.

This is a solemn warning to hypocritical professors. You may deceive family, friends, and the pastor, but remember, you cannot deceive Christ. He who discovered the deadness of Sardis and the lukewarmness of Laodicea sees you through and through. Unless you repent, you will be exposed and lost. Hypocrisy is a losing game.

The eye that saw Achan steal the golden wedge is on you. The book that recorded the deeds of Gehazi, Ananias, and Sapphira is recording your and my ways. Jesus in mercy is sending a warning: "I know thy works."

After He said, "I know thy works," He makes a promise to the one who overcomes. We are glad that we can overcome. I pray that God will help us as the Church of God. The gates of hell cannot prevail against her. No outside force or scheme that the devil can work can prevail against her in any way. But if we allow the devil to get inside and work among us, the church can be hindered. What is the source of our real victory? "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear [heed] what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

Thank God for unity, thank God for congregations, but every one of us is individually responsible before God. No matter what the people around us do, we are individually responsible before God.

Victory is promised "to him that overcometh." Overcometh what? Those things which have put you in a position where you have not been heeding what the Spirit saith unto you. You can overcome today. He will give you power over sin and over self. He will give you power over the nations. In other words, your life will become more effective in winning a lost-and-dying world to Christ.

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