

The Opened Ear

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon emphasizes the importance of having an opened ear to God for guidance and ministry, as exemplified by Jesus in Isaiah 50.

Scripture: Isaiah 50:4

Topics: "Listening to God", "Ministry of Hope"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the significance of having an 'opened ear' to the Lord, contrasting Israel's rebellion and refusal to listen with the obedient response of the Servant of the Lord, Jesus Christ. He highlights how Jesus, through His suffering and dependence on God, exemplified the importance of listening and receiving divine instruction daily. This opened ear not only sustains the individual but also equips them to bring hope and reassurance to others in despair. Sparks encourages believers to cultivate a habit of listening to God, especially in quiet times, to effectively minister to those who are weary. The message underscores the transformative power of being attuned to God's voice in our daily lives.

Transcript

Reading: Isaiah 50:4-9

This passage in Isa. 50 needs to be read closely in connection with chapter 49, and indeed recognised as to its setting in the whole of the section of the prophecies. The position is that of Israel's rebelliously going backward in spite of all the Lord's speaking to them through His prophets. They refused to open their ear to the Lord. The result? - they were, as this chapter puts it at the beginning, divorced by the Lord. They were cut off and committed to captivity; and then in these chapters up to 53, the Servant of the Lord in His redemptive work is so fully and wonderfully brought into view, and it is concerning Him that these words are spoken. They give to us some little suggestion of how the people are served unto their salvation. We have, first, sin and its consequences, and then the Redeemer-Servant and the cost of redemption. "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, I hid not my face from shame and spitting" - words which were literally fulfilled in the case of the Lord Jesus. Then His vindication is referred to in verses 7-9. "The Lord Jehovah will help me; therefore have I not been confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame. He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me..." and so on. It is the Lord Himself speaking in the presence of His Cross, and looking with confidence to the issue of His sufferings, His vindication in resurrection; and because of all that - the confidence that He had in God, and His willingness to pay the price of their salvation - He brings this word

of hope: "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of them that are taught, that I may know how to sustain with words him that is weary." That is the word of hope to a people without hope in a very desperate situation, "to sustain with words him that is weary" - a ministry of hope through the Cross in the resurrection, in the vindication, of the suffering Servant.

Then He simply indicates that that ministry of hope, of re-assurance, that word of life and salvation, that changing of the darkness to light, is because of the opposite attitude on His part to that which brought about the darkness and the death. They turned back rebelliously and closed their ear to the word of the Lord. He turned toward God obediently and opened His ear; that is He listened, He took note, He received the word of the Lord. Pre-eminently this applies to the Lord Jesus, but in principle of course it applies to us, and the whole thing is now brought to rest upon this - a daily life governed by an ear opened to the Lord. "He wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as they that are taught." It is rather remarkable that the Lord Jesus should be saying that He is as a disciple, as a learner, as one who is taught. It shows how completely, while being out from God and the Creator of all things, He is in the flesh dependent utterly upon God for everything, receiving from the Father His daily direction and instruction. What a picture of self-emptying! How fully His words were true - "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father doing" (John 5:19) - a daily dependence upon the Father for everything, and a receiving of everything from the Father. Well, of course, we know how true that is of ourselves, but it is very wonderful that His ministry of hope depended upon, and sprang out of, His waiting morning by morning to hear what the Father had to say to Him, to teach Him, to tell Him for His ministry.

It again brings a tremendous emphasis upon the place of the ear. We have seen something of how important the ear is in the life of the child of God, and here it comes back again in this very beautiful passage. If we are going to bring some hope into a hopeless situation, to sustain with words him that is weary, him that is ready to faint, we have to be in very close touch with the Lord: we must get everything from Him, we must have an ear opened. This does not mean simply a readiness to hear what He says, but in this case, as contrary to Israel, it means an eager readiness to do what is heard. And so, with an ear opened and responsive, a ministry of value to others arises. Before you are through that chapter, you come to those wonderful words which exhort those who walk in darkness and have no light to stay themselves upon their God, and if you put that as a part of the prophecy and make it apply to the Lord Jesus, as undoubtedly it does, it is a very wonderful thing - walking in darkness and having no light, and yet day by day in touch with the Lord so that you can help others. Well, that is simply what it amounts to. Others are going to be helped, sustained, given hope, by those who live daily in touch with the Lord, and I think that it does suggest something as to the place of the early morning quiet time, the ear opened morning by morning. I think sometimes we use that quiet time almost exclusively for talking to the Lord. I wonder if there is not also part of it to be used in listening to the Lord. "...morning by morning, he wakeneth my ear", the result, others helped, a ministry of re-assurance and hope.

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