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Ears That Hear Not

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Matthew 13:13 "Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand."

Matthew 13-14 "And in them the prophesy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not preceive'".

Sometimes, when you're trying to live spiritually, you can miss the spiritual because you're too set to see, or in this case of my testimony, HEAR the carnal.

I want to share with you a testimony, one I had in county jail. This testimony may well have several meanings, but I'd like to focus it on the idea that, as believers of Jesus Christ, sometimes we can miss the forest for the trees...

What the heck does that mean? I suppose it means missing the obvious.

Now, we get that in the natural. The "obvious" is something commonly known to the general public. If I saw you

with athletic clothes on, and a basketball in your hand, headed towards a basketball court, it wouldn't be wise to ask, "Hey, are you going to play basketball"?

(To which you could reply, "No, I'm going to a wedding!") small joke.

But you get the understanding of what I'm saying, even if I joke. We see the simplicity of it in the natural, but the spiritual is not so easy. Read the Bible to see how many times Jesus said something spiritual, and it went right over the people's heads. Remember Jairus' daughter? Jesus said "She is not dead, but sleeping" (Matthew 9:24). Jesus spoke in the spirit, but the people, being carnal, completely missed it. They heard, with natural ears, but not with SPIRITUAL ears.

This leads to my testimony, and how God was patient with me when I wasn't listening spiritually. I'm not really sure if I should laugh at myself, or be embarrassed. I'll let you decide. Ok, let's begin;

I was in county jail, before coming here to USP Tucson. When you're arrested, you can sit for a long time before your "day in court". During those months (about 14) I tried my best to stay in faith. Yes, it was very stressful, but I believed God would be with me. I'd been in tough spots before, and I had seen God work miracles in my life. Regardless of why I was in jail, my God would sit in that cell

with me.

But, because I'm human, there were times I felt like I had no direction, or hope. It may be a cliché to say, but I wasn't a bad guy. But you can't tell that to mainstream society. Anyway, there were times I was depressed beyond the breaking point... even suicidal...

Let me pause here to tell you guys, if you know somebody that has lost hope, take a real effort to pray for them. You might be that person's last hope before suicide. Believe me, I know...

In that cell, I felt miserable, and I needed a word from God in the worst way. I needed affirmation that even in a jail cell, God was gonna work things out. If I knew that, then I could endure incarceration, if the end result is my deliverance. Heck, how many people in the Bible spent time in jail or prison? I just needed to "hear" from God.

My expectation wasn't based on chance or a wild imagination. Years before, when I was in college, during the summer of my upcoming senior year, I "heard" God speak three words to me. The words were as loud as a bell, and as clear as crystals. Nobody was anywhere the room I was in, so there was no mistake to Who said it.

The words were, "Write For Me".

It was the first time I had "heard" from God, and it wasn't the last. Now, don't get all creepy on me. I don't have a halo over my head; I'm not perfect. But I'm also not crazy. I know what I heard.

So, now here I am, in a single cell, in a county jail, about ready to give up on life. I found out that with the right items, one could hang one's self from the shower nozzle...

Sadly, I tried it, and it nearly worked. THAT is another story...

So there I was, needing to hear from God. He did it before, He can do it again. So, I figured I'd do something I read in the Bible...fast.

There is much to be said for fasting. I don't have the time to discuss it here, but believe me, it can be most helpful in your spiritual walk. I've fasted before to success, but I've also fasted improperly. It's not about starving yourself, that's the carnal way of looking at it. People who think that way don't understand what fasting is all about, and why it can be a valuable part of a prayerful life. But in MY case, it was a little of both.

In my frustration, I remember on a Thursday evening, in great despair, telling myself that I would fast until I heard from God. I promised myself that I ^{would} ~~would~~ not eat or drink

anything until God spoke to me. I was determined that one of two things was going to happen. Either God would answer... or I would die of starvation.

So it began. Friday morning we get the trays. I took the food as they passed it through the trap door of my cell (think like a mail-chute on your front door). I dare not tell officers that I was refusing food; they'd think I was starving myself, and try to "help" me. And it didn't help that my MOM was a deputy sheriff there either. No one must know what I was doing.

So I acted like I was going to eat it, but as soon as they left, the food and drink went straight into the toilet. Why did I do that? Immediately putting the food there prevented any second thoughts. The county jail food was actually pretty good... a lot better than the federal prison food.

So every meal went the same way. Friday lunch, Friday dinner. Saturday breakfast, lunch and dinner. Every meal went to the toilet, and I sat the Styrofoam tray in the corner. I refused to eat. God MUST speak to me, or I will die. I needed some reassurance that as bad as things looked, there was still a plan from God.

But each meal I refused sapped strength. I was getting weaker and weaker. Not that it mattered; I was in the cell 24 hours a day, single cell. Nobody bothered me, or talked to me.

If an officer did talk to me, I showed no signs of what I was doing. I kept a positive outlook about me, even if I felt shattered inside. Had God really deserted me?

Sunday morning came, and so did the breakfast...straight to the toilet. I refused to eat, and hadn't done so since Thursday. Sunday lunch came, and went...right into the toilet. As with every meal, I scraped the food into the toilet, with the drink and flushed it. I'm NOT eating until I heard from God... or I die.

But in that period of time, something was telling me that my fasting wasn't right. It was like God didn't want me to fast this way. Fasting, done the right way, can be very helpful, but doing it the wrong way may not yield results. Yet, each time that thought came up, I flatly refused it. I don't care. I'm not eating until I hear from God.

That Sunday afternoon, I was sitting on the floor, feeling weak and depressed. I was already looking to Monday, and the meals I'd skip. But it was then something unusual happened. Something was telling me that I should eat. It was almost... pleading me to eat, knowing how weak I was. But I refused. No, I will not eat until I hear from God.

It was then I got an offer. Get this; the "Someone" in my thoughts said that if I got an extra tray for dinner, would I call the fast off. Now, you need to understand why this was so important:

One, Sundays was the best meal in the county jail... chicken dinner! Two, these officers RARELY give second trays. Three, other inmates are always yelling for extras; I stood no chance. Four... my pride would NEVER allow me to ask for an additional tray. One was always enough. And five, the officer working does NOT give extras anyway. Some do...he doesn't.

So, if the bet (offer) was to call off the fast if I was given a second tray... game on! I'll still be fasting at the end of Sunday. So dinner comes, the best meal of the week...but I'll see it swim in the toilet (after I break it up, so it can go down the toilet, bones and all). At dinnertime they bring the trays; they're counted out, so they have the number they need. I get mine, sit for a second, waiting... nothing. I move over to the door, and put the tray by the door. I sat back down on my bunk, hungry, and even more depressed.

I won't eat. I just won't.

After about 10-15 minutes, I realized nothing was gonna happen. I sadly got up, to get the tray, and dump it in the toilet.

But just as I was about to do so, the trap opens, and without a word, the officers slide to me a SECOND tray! Guys, I'm not lying to you! Immediately I recalled the "offer" to call off the fast if I got a second tray. You cannot know how

impossibly hard it is to get a second tray... on Sunday... without ASKING!

With tears in my eyes, I could barely see the tray as I took the first one, and went to my bunk, and began to do something I hadn't done since Thursday...eat. Tears fell on my plate as I enjoyed two chicken dinners. It was then, as my hope returned, that God not only answered...He had been answering the whole time.

Just who do you think that "Someone" was?

If I was spiritually minded, I would have been eating on Saturday. But even though I was listening to God, I wasn't paying attention. God didn't want me sad; I bet He's got feelings too. How would you feel if someone you loved was in a depression? You'd do what you could to help. God is most compassionate, and was patient and caring about me and my feelings. But I had to see it spiritually, and for awhile, I couldn't see it.

That experience taught me a lot about my faith, and is solid proof that God cares about us. Even if everyone else bails out, God has a good purpose for us, if we'd just hang in there. Perhaps that experience has led me to write and encourage others- even from prison. I won't be the first guy to write from prison.

So, if you're going through a down time, don't give

up. If you'll give God even a sliver of light to work with, He'll help you and give you direction and comfort. Gosh, if I can get it from a county jail, you can get it anywhere, at anytime. God's not restricted to any place or time.

Until next time...

P.S.: Sorry about the delay; lately USP Tucson has been under investigation because of mail tampering. For quite awhile, we've been saying that the mail room had been destroying personal mail, opening legal mail, and not sending our mail out.

If you've sent me anything in the past month or so, I've likely not gotten it because of that. It's also discouraged me from mailing as much, because I didn't want to put 10 letters in the mail box, to have some disposed of by officers who simply didn't want to forward my mail.

I am hopeful that I can send more in the near future, and I hope that this prison will be more respectful of our mail, so I can send more letters out in the near future.

I hope this essay will be helpful to those who read it; I've much more to share, given the opportunity. My thanks for taking the time to read my essay, and my thoughts...

Federick Mason

