

LIVING BY REVELATION

In the previous lesson we discussed the importance of walking in an abiding faith relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. We need to know Him as the author and finisher of our faith. We must be persuaded that He is able to do what He has promised to do. Without this relationship of trust and reliance upon God, it is impossible to please Him (Hebrews 11:6). It is through this relationship that we are to begin developing a mature faith.

In this lesson we will answer some important questions about faith:

1. What is faith's relationship to the Scriptures?
2. What is the difference between the Word of God and a word from God?
3. What is the difference between "logos" and "rhema"?
4. Can one take any promise in the Bible and try to possess it by faith, or is it necessary to personally hear from God concerning each promise?
5. How do you know you are hearing the voice of God?

These are only a few of many questions that arise in our hearts when it comes to understanding and building personal faith. The Bible does have a clear answer pertaining to all these questions. There is a clear biblical teaching on faith that doesn't make God the servant of the believer or bring the believer back under legalism.

The Christian life is a life of faith, but the question is, upon **what** is this faith based? The true foundation of the Christian life is Jesus Christ Himself! It is not a set of beliefs, not a church, denomination or creed. It is Jesus Christ Himself, for *"... no other foundation can anyone lay..."* (1 Corinthians 3:11, Isaiah 28:16, 1 Peter 2:6). This refers to the individual and personal experience of Jesus Christ the Son of God as revealed by the Holy Spirit. *"And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent"* (John 17:3).

FAITH'S RELATIONSHIP TO SCRIPTURE

Now we come to a very important point: the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Word of God. It goes without saying that throughout the scriptures the Bible declares itself to be the "Word of God." On the other hand, there are a number of passages in Scripture where the same title-the Word or the Word of God-is given to Jesus Christ Himself (John 1: 1, 14; Revelation 19:13). Before the foundations of the world, Christ was the eternal Word with the Father. In his incarnation Christ is the Word made flesh. In this sense, Christ is perfectly one with the Scripture. Both are the Word of God since each is a divine, authoritative, perfect revelation of God and each agrees perfectly with the other. The Scripture perfectly and prophetically reveals Christ and Christ perfectly fulfills the Scripture. Scriptures are the written Word of God; Christ is the living Word of God. There is absolutely no disagreement between the Bible and what Jesus said, did, or is doing.

The source of true biblical faith is the Word of God (Romans 10:17), which means to hear the Lord Jesus Christ speak to our hearts by the Holy Spirit. The Living Word, Jesus Christ, is the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). The source of true faith then is both Christ, the Living Word, and-Scripture, the written Word.

FAITH THREE

With this respect for the authority of the Bible, coupled with a desire to mature in Christ, the believer is in a position to receive faith as he hears the Lord speak from the Word and then obediently applies the teachings to his life. In this way, Christ manifests Himself to each disciple (John 14:23) and a personal relationship with the Lord is built. It is in relationship with the Living Word that God uses the Scripture to speak to His people, reveal Himself to His people, guide and direct His people, and consequently establish faith in His people.

LOGOS The Bible teaches that the natural mind cannot understand spiritual things unless they are revealed by the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:10-14). Revelation and faith come through the Holy Spirit breathing life upon the Word of God. However, there is a difference between the Word of God in general and the word of God which is spoken specifically to you. In the Greek New Testament this is usually differentiated by the two words, "logos" and "rhema."

According to Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, "logos denotes the expression of thought – not the mere name of an object – as embodying a conception or idea." The full meaning of logos extends beyond a specific word that is spoken or written. Logos actually refers to the whole communication process. This includes the forming of thoughts, the choosing of words, the speaking forth of these words, and the reception and understanding of these words in the mind of the hearer.

Logos as used in Scripture can refer to man-to-man communication or it may signify communication from God to man. Several instances are observed in the New Testament where logos refers to the Old Testament. An example is when Jesus accused the Jews of making void the word of God by their traditions (Mark 7:13). Jesus Himself was also an agent of God's communication. Luke recorded that the crowd was pressing upon Jesus "... to hear the word of God" (Luke 5:1).

Logos is the sum total of God's utterances, including the law, the prophets and the gospels. It is God's speech, His discourse, which is true everywhere under all conditions. In this sense, logos is the unchanging, self-existent Word of God. It is God's counsel, settled in eternity before time began and due to continue into eternity long after time has run its course. David spoke of this divine logos in Psalm 119:89 when he said, "*Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven.*" Nothing that happens on earth can ever affect or change this word that is eternal in heaven.

Most significantly, logos is used as a name for the eternal Christ who became flesh—the living expression of God's will, and the perfect revelation of His character to man. The first chapter of the Gospel of John states that Jesus is the Logos of God. W. E. Vine says that Jesus, "...was the Shekinah glory in open manifestation. 'The only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him,' thus fulfilling the significance of the title "Logos," the Word, the personal manifestation, not a part of the Divine nature, but of the whole Deity."

Hallelujah! The eternal God became flesh, clothed with manhood. The **logos** was **clothed with flesh** to win our eternal salvation. Without a doubt this is the highest use of logos in the history of literature; the Word was God (John 1:1)! The ultimate meaning of **Logos** is the incarnate Word of God, Jesus Christ. The Word who was present at the beginning is God's last Word to man: Jesus, the eternal Word of the eternal God (Hebrews 1:2). In Jesus, the Word of God, the Logos of God took final and absolute form.

In the Old Testament man spoke as God gave utterance. The "word of God" came upon the prophet and he spoke it without regard to his personal condition (Numbers 23:5-12). God's word flowed through him without the feelings or opinions of the man being expressed. However, a physical body was prepared for the Word of God (Hebrews 10:5), and the Word became flesh (John 1:14). Jesus, as the Logos of God, was the pure Word of God.

Think about a "word" for a moment. When someone speaks a word, what are they saying? They are speaking themselves. Whatever you are, that is what you are saying. The sound or articulation that you put to "you" are the clothes that are on your thoughts so that you can be understood. Clothes that are on your words are not flesh but sound. A word is a thought expressed in such a way that it is understood by someone else.

When Jesus came, He was God and He was God's word. When God spoke, He spoke Himself. God's word became flesh; God's word became man. Everything that God spoke was gathered in a body of flesh. Now the Word was dressed in a man so that it had human thoughts, human feelings and human opinions. Jesus was (and is) all God and all man. Now the Word (Logos), instead of coming upon a man, is embodied in a man. Something has changed. God's Word has become flesh and uses all the feelings of man. In Jesus the human thoughts and feelings are also God's thoughts and feelings. Here was a man who, when He expressed thoughts, expressed God's thoughts. Here was a man who was the Word of God, the Logos, and as He expressed it with human feelings, it was God's feelings toward man. God did not want His word to be **just** words, but He wanted His Word to be a Person.

Rhema is defined by Vine's as "...that which is spoken, what is uttered in speech or writing; in the singular, a word; in the plural, speech, discourse... The significance of rhema (as distinct from logos) is exemplified in the injunction to take 'the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,' Ephesians 6:17; here the reference is not to the whole Bible as such, but to the individual scripture which the Spirit brings to our remembrance for use in time of need, a prerequisite being the regular storing of the mind with Scripture."

RHEMA

Rhema is derived from a verb meaning "to speak," and denotes specifically a **word that is spoken** – something that occurs in time and space. In Romans 10:17, when Paul said, "...*faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,*" he used the word **rhema**, not **logos**. This agrees with the fact that he couples "word" with "hearing." Logically, in order to be heard, a word, must be spoken.

Some people "have twisted Romans 10:17 to mean, "faith comes by the word of God." This is not what this passage says or means. Faith does not come by the word of God; faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. We are responsible to read the Bible and as we do, God will speak to us. When He speaks, hearing His rhema word will impart faith to us.

Rhema often refers to a word which is spoken so that a particular action can be taken. In John 1 logos is divine, while rhema may be a human word. The logos tends to be general, while the rhema is often used in the specific sense. The logos is objective, while the rhema is often subjective, a word spoken for a particular occasion to a particular person. The logos is eternal, while the rhema is for the present. This means that when we read the Bible, we need to distinguish between the rhema – the word which is spoken to a particular person, and the logos – the word which is eternal.

This is not to say that we may ignore the logos while waiting for a rhema. The Bible is the expressed will of God. Obedience to the logos is obedience to the expressed will of God. God expands our understanding of His will as we are obedient to His word. Disobedience stops this flow of revelation. The emphasis of rhema is on the actual word spoken. Many of us heard the gospel many times before we responded to it. When we heard the gospel, was it not logos the first time we heard it? Of course it was, but as we listened, the Holy Spirit brought increasing conviction to us. Then one wonderful day the word became rhema to us, we heard the voice of God and responded to Him. This is precisely what Romans 10:17 means. The word (rhema) of God causes us to hear and hearing brings about faith.

So then, rhema refers to an event of revelation. That is to say, when God shows up something happens and that "thing" is called rhema. An illustration regarding initial salvation will be helpful here. The event of Christ's death and resurrection can be seen as a mere historical fact. Believing this truth would be sufficient if salvation was determined by passing a true-false examination. On the other hand, if a man participates in the "rhema" of the event, that is, if he died with Christ was buried with him and raised to walk in newness of life-then his faith is no longer an intellectual exercise related to an historical event. His faith becomes a spiritual reality as a result of being "audience" to the divine rhema. This changes his very being at the core.

The Holy Spirit is the agency of the rhema, the specific word of God. As noted earlier, the logos of revelation is identified with God (*"the word was God"*). Jesus came as Son to manifest the Father. As Jesus, the Logos, became flesh, He bore witness of His Father. God the Son is the one who reveals God the Father. However, it is the Holy Spirit who imparts the reality of that revelation to man through rhema.

The Holy Spirit will take the very words that will meet your need at a particular moment and impart His life to them. They become a rhema – something you can "hear" – a living voice speaking to your heart. This agrees with Paul's statement in 2 Corinthians 3:6, "... *the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*" Apart from the

Holy Spirit, there is no rhema. In the Bible, the logos – the total counsel of God – is made available to us, but logos is too vast and complex to comprehend or assimilate in its totality. Rhema is the means by which the Holy Spirit takes a portion of logos and relates it to our time and human experience. Rhema is that portion of the total logos that the Holy Spirit applies at a certain point in time to a particular situation. Through rhema, logos is divinely applied to our lives and thus becomes specific and personal to us. We cannot, by our own study and will, convert logos to rhema; the action of the Holy Spirit is required for logos to become rhema.

Rhema is not merely teaching or preaching **about** Christ. It is the event itself being made real to the individual by the Holy Spirit. This might "happen" while listening to a sermon or a teaching or while reading the Bible. Rhema does not come as a result of studying logical proofs, though one might be studying proofs at the time. Rhema might even come in a flash of light when one is going against God. This is what happened to Saul of Tarsus; rhema came as an event of God presenting Himself to man as the Redeemer. Rhema always comes as "Emmanuel," God with us here and now for this situation.

We may sum up the relationship between logos and rhema in the following statements:

- Rhema takes the eternal logos and injects it into time.
- Rhema takes the heavenly logos and brings it down to earth.
- Rhema takes the potential logos and makes it actual.
- Rhema takes the general logos and makes it specific.
- Rhema takes a portion of the total logos and presents it in a form that man can understand.

At this point, the response required from us is "hearing." To the extent that we "hear," we receive faith. What then is involved in "hearing?" Sometimes it is simply a "knowing," an inner sense that a particular logos has been enlightened by the Holy Spirit. Another time a word may "show up" again and again without it becoming a rhema, but as we meditate upon it in patience, the revelation will be given by the Holy Spirit. Similarly, when we are in need of a word on which to stand in faith, it must be possessed in patience. While resting in the absolute character of God, we give close, undivided attention to what God is saying to us by His Holy Spirit. We incline our ears and adopt a humble, teachable attitude toward God. We renounce our own prejudices and preconceptions and accept what God says in its most plain and practical meaning. We focus our eyes on the words to which God has directed us. Even when the words are no longer before our eyes, we continue to meditate on them in our hearts. In this way, we retain them continually at the center of our being and their influence permeates every area of our lives.

HEARING AND
KNOWING

As God's rhema comes to us in this way, it is both specific and personal; it comes to each of us directly and individually from God. It is appropriate to a specific time and place. It presupposes an ongoing, personal relationship with God. By each successive rhema, God guides us in the individual walk of faith to which He

has called us: A rhema that is given to one believer may not be appropriate for another believer or even for the same believer in another stage of his experience.

The life of continual dependence upon God's rhema is clearly seen in the words which Jesus used to answer Satan's first temptation in the wilderness: "*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word (rhema) that proceeds from the mouth of God*" (Matthew 4:4). The word "proceeds" is in the continuous present tense. We could say "every word as it proceeds (or is proceeding) out of the mouth of God." Jesus is referring here to a specific word proceeding directly from God and energized by "the breath of His mouth," which is the Holy Spirit. This is our "daily bread"-always fresh, always "proceeding." As we live in continual dependence upon God's Word, it imparts to us, day by day, the faith by which "the righteous man will live."

HAVING A GOOD REPORT

Hebrews 11:1 *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*

Throughout Hebrews Chapter 11, there are many great examples of Bible "faith people." What was it that distinguished these people as men and women of faith? The answer is that each heard and obeyed a rhema word from the Lord. This can be best explained in the following way:

Elders (vs. 2)..... obtained a good report
Abel (vs. 4)..... obtained witness regarding his sacrifice
Enoch (vs. 5).....had testimony from God that he pleased Him
Noah (vs. 7)..... was warned by God of the coming flood
Abraham (vs. 8).....: was called out by God
Sarah (vs. 11).....knew God was faithful because He promised
Isaac and Jacob (vs. 20-21)..... had the same promise as their father

All the others mentioned in Hebrews 11 obtained a good report through faith (vs. 39). These are all examples of people who obtained a good report by believing that what God had said would come to pass. They saw the promises afar off and embraced them, even though they did not see the fulfillment of the promises in their day (Hebrews 11:13, 39). They received rhema from God many times through personal visitations from the Lord. We today have the same opportunity to obtain a good report by receiving God's promises through the rhema of the Spirit, and possessing them as our own through faith and patience.

SUMMARY

Finally, let's summarize the answers to the questions we asked at the beginning of the lesson.

1. What is faith's relationship to the Scriptures?

The source of true biblical faith is hearing the Word (rhema) of God (Romans 10:17), which is to hear the Lord Jesus Christ speak to the heart. Most of the time He speaks through the Bible.

2. What is the difference between the Word of God and a word from God?

The Word of God is the Bible, the Logos, the Scriptures, and is God's general word to all. A word from God is a specific word to a specific person.

3. What is the difference between "logos" and "rhema"?

Logos is God's general, unchanging counsel manifested in the Bible and in Jesus. Rhema is a specific word from God for a particular person at a particular time.

4. Can one take any promise in the Bible and try to possess it by faith, or is it necessary to personally hear from God concerning each promise?

Any promise must be made alive (rhema) to us personally by the Holy Spirit before it can be possessed. Sometimes patiently waiting on God is a necessary part of the process.

5. How do you know you are hearing the voice of God?

There is an inner intuitive "knowing" in your spirit which will always line up with the written Word of God.