

Faith When God is Silent

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If you are a born again believer and you are walking with Jesus Christ, you know that there are times -- some of which are extended seasons that can last for years; a decade or more -- where God seems to be silent to you or indifferent to you. You can't seem to find God. Those can be very trying times.

Those are trials of faith. So what does, "a trial of faith," really mean? Well, a trial of faith is a challenge, or a contradiction, to your faith -- and one of the things that, "tries us," the most is when God seems to be silent or indifferent to us.

What we are going to see today is an example of that -- and what Jesus has to say about it. But we are also going to see that God is never silent. God is never indifferent. God is never far away. We are going to see that not only does the faithfulness of God guarantee that -- but we are going to see that, in fact, Jesus died to make it a certainty.

Now along that line, when I say that Jesus' death makes it a certainty that God is never indifferent -- i.e., God is always with us -- I don't want anyone to misunderstand. Many Christians think that Jesus died to change GOD'S attitude -- so that he would draw near to us and not be mad at us anymore. That is not the Truth. Rather, Jesus died so that WE could be changed and be brought back into fellowship with God. God never needed to be changed. He always loved man. It is man who had the problem.

How many understand that the problem between God and man was NEVER God. It has ALWAYS been man. But Jesus died to make it possible for us to hear God; to know God; to fellowship with God.

Faith Without Seeing

Let's read in John 4, beginning in verse 46:

So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee where he made the water, wine. There was a certain nobleman whose son was sick at Capernaum and when he heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into Galilee, he went unto Him and besought Him that He would come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death.

In verse 48, we see the response of Jesus:

“Except you see signs and wonders, you will not believe.”

Now what is Jesus really saying here? I think it is easy to miss. First of all this man -- to some degree -- DID believe. Why do I say that? Because he came to Jesus and asked for healing. You have to have some faith to do that -- and really, if you examine some of the other gospel accounts of people who were healed, many of them came and asked Jesus for healing. This man certainly had every bit as much faith as those others did in those instances. I don't think Jesus is criticizing him, “Why do you want me to heal your son? You don't have any faith?” No, he DID have some faith. He believed enough to come to Jesus.

Neither do I think that Jesus was complaining because this guy wanted a miracle or was merely seeking after a sign. No. Jesus intended to work the miracle -- and that miracle was a sign or a wonder of sorts. Rather, Jesus was correcting this man because of his insistence that Jesus come down to that geographical location in order to heal his son.

How many understand that there is a big difference between believing that God will work a miracle when you cannot see Him present in a situation -- as opposed to insisting that God work a miracle that manifests signs and wonders -- thus

proving to you that He is present? There is a big difference between the two. In the former case -- where you can't sense God's presence -- it is, "harder to believe," if I can use that terminology. But in the latter case, where God is working signs and wonders, it is a lot, "easier," to believe that God is present. This is the issue here. The man wanted Jesus to come down to that geographical location and Jesus said, "Unless you see Me there; unless you see me working miracles with your eyes in an outward way -- you won't believe." Of course, Jesus' implication is, "I can heal him from right here at this moment." Indeed, we are going to read an account where He does exactly that.

We see here a principle and a lesson that comprises the message for today. Many of us will not believe that God is faithful unless we FIRST see tangible evidence -- and is not such evidence a sign or a wonder? Sure it is. OUTWARD EVIDENCE that God is present is the definition of a sign or wonder. And many of us will not believe that God is faithful unless we see tangible evidence that God is with us; that He is present; that He is doing something -- unless we have some sign. In fact, if God does not give us some outward sign of His presence many of us doubt God, and may even begin to accuse God of being indifferent. We like tangible proof that God is present -- and there are a lot of different ways in which this can manifest itself. But if we are not careful, our doubts may really constitute unbelief.

This particular nobleman, who had the sick son, apparently had enough faith to ask Jesus to heal that son. But he wanted Jesus to be present to do the healing -- He wanted to SEE the evidence of the presence of Jesus. In the eyes of Jesus this was a breach of faith.

Amazingly, despite the correction Jesus gave to the man, and despite the fact that Jesus was, in effect, refusing to come down to heal the son -- Jesus nevertheless DID heal him -- without being outwardly present with the son. In effect, Jesus

was saying, "I will heal your son from right here -- because I love you and I love your son."

If you gather all of this up, what do you have? You have a principle: Some of the greatest miracles of God are ones that we do not SEE happening with our eyes. We don't actually see God doing anything in a situation -- but we see that He was present because we see the results.

God is capable of doing things in that way -- just as much as He is capable of putting on a big show. If I read my Bible correctly, it would appear to me that God prefers the former rather than the latter. He does not want to put on a big show.

It is so important that we learn these lessons. How many have learned that our discernment of the presence of God is irrelevant as to whether He is faithful? God's faithfulness and His willingness to help are not dependent upon whether WE discern Him. It is dependent upon HIM. Indeed, as we are going to see today, God is just as present, just as willing, and just as able at one time as He is at another time. He never changes. WE fluctuate up and down, back and forth -- but GOD stays the same. So there is a great need for God to get us to the point where we focus on HIM -- and not upon how we feel or upon what we see.

Building Faith

Let's read on:

And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him and he went his way. As he was going down, his servants met him and told him saying, "Your son lives." He inquired of them the hour that his son began to get well and they said unto him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him." And the father knew that it was at the same hour that Jesus said to him, "Your son lives."

The nobleman initially had enough faith to ask Jesus to heal his son. He could not fathom that Jesus could heal his son from afar – he expected Jesus to need to be physically present to heal his son. Jesus bypassed all of those expectations and nevertheless healed the son – but no one actually SAW Jesus heal the son. There was no sign or wonder. The result was of this miracle was not only the healing, but also more: It says in verse 53 that the nobleman believed AND his whole house.

Now, this is easy to miss, but notice what we are being taught here: Often, Jesus Christ will NOT break in upon a situation and do something in an outward way; speak a word that no one could miss; show Himself; work a sign or a wonder. He will often absolutely refuse to do that – He will NOT show Himself in a situation. He will not let anyone actually see Him work a miracle or His will. What He will do is say, “I want you to believe anyway. I want you to believe I am faithful regardless of whether you can see HOW I am being faithful. I have many ways of working my will that will not appear to be miraculous.”

If you read this account, and take it as a spiritual principle, what you see is this: When God seems silent, and He doesn't seem present, it is an opportunity for us to believe Him -- regardless of His silence. And if we do, our faith will actually be strengthened and built. It happened in this account. The man who was chastised for not believing unless he saw signs and wonders, ended up believing -- as did his whole household.

Take note also that despite the need for Jesus to correct this man -- that He went ahead and worked the miracle anyway -- because He loved these people. But He worked the miracle in an unseen way – and it ended up building up the faith of all of those involved.

God knows what He is doing. And when He seems silent and absent, it is because He is doing a work in us to build our faith. Faith will come to be in us -- where there was no faith before -- if we surrender to Jesus and let Him have His way -- despite His silence. When we cannot see God -- God can nevertheless see us. When Jesus doesn't seem to be present -- we need to understand that He is always there. He is there because He is faithful. He is there because if we are born from above, Christ is IN US.

Great Faith

Now I want to turn to Luke 7:2. This is another account -- not a parallel account -- of a similar situation:

And a certain centurion's servant, who was very dear unto him was sick and ready to die. And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews to speak to Him that He would come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they besought Him instantly saying that he was worthy for whom He should this, for he loves our nation and he has built us a synagogue. Then Jesus went with them and when Jesus was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends unto Him and saying unto Him, "Lord, trouble not yourself for I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof, neither thought I myself worthy to come to You, but say in a word and my servant will be healed." When Jesus heard these things, He marveled at him, and when He turned about, He said unto the people that followed Him, "I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."

Then in verse 10:

And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.

Now, how many see the contrast between the first account and this one? In fact, if you read this account in Luke 7, it

verifies everything I was gathering up from the first account in John 4. In both accounts, the main issue of faith is not so much the healing. The real issue is whether the person believed without seeing – the issue is whether the person's faith made SEEING the miracle necessary. In the first account, the guy insisted upon seeing Jesus heal his son. Jesus said, "No." But Jesus healed him anyway. In this Luke 7 account, Jesus was actually willing to be present, but the man himself said, "You don't need to do this. I don't need to see in order to believe. I know you can heal from afar." It is this faith that Jesus say is GREAT faith.

How many see what we are being told here? We are being told that it is GREAT FAITH to believe God; to believe Jesus Christ – even when it doesn't even seem as though He is present – even when there are no signs and no wonders; even when there are no indications or suggestion that God is present, or that He is interested in your problem. It is GREAT FAITH to believe God regardless of the absence of all of these things. Great faith in God does NOT believe the silence, the fear, and the anxiety, that might rise up in you. Great faith does not believe circumstances, or anything in your natural man that would suggest that God is unfaithful. Rather, you believe God Himself through his Son regardless of the circumstances, or your reactions to those circumstances. You believe that, "He is faithful who has promised."

Does God keep His promises? God's promises are as certain as Jesus Christ. The Bible says, "All the promises of God are IN HIM yes, and IN HIM amen." (II Cor. 1:20) The promises of God do not find their yes and amen, that is to say, their affirmation and certainty, in YOU and ME. NO. God not only GAVE His promises, but He will bring them to pass. Indeed, all of the promises of God are found in Jesus Christ, and they are unfolded as Jesus Christ is unfolded to us and in us. God can certainly do anything He wants, any time He wants. But primarily, the promises of God are wrapped up in the Person

of His Son – and God has never promised to do anything independent of His Son. The promises of God are IN CHRIST, and they find their yes and amen – their coming to pass – as Christ is unfolded and given His place.

God is Always With Us

So, we come down to this question: Will we believe even when God seems silent; even when God doesn't seem to be around? Now, you will notice that I chose my words carefully -- I said that when God SEEMS to be silent, and when he SEEMS to be absent. I am using that word, "seems," because as I noted at the beginning of this message, there is never a time when God is not speaking. He may not be speaking what we want Him to speak; He may not be answering the questions we have asked, indeed, we may not presently have ears to hear. But He IS speaking.

I am not saying that God is always speaking and revealing Himself through signs and wonders -- through external ways. He is not always doing that, in fact, He rarely does it. I am simply stating that God speaks and reveals Himself continuously by the Spirit in His Son. This is not how many people think God reveals Himself or speaks. But it is His primary way of speaking: In His Son.

This gets back to some of the fundamental definitions and principles of Christianity. The core definition of Christianity is, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Colossians 1:27) Or, if you prefer, another term Paul uses to express the same truth: "You in Christ." The two are the same. They are based on the fact that when we are saved, we are joined to the Lord and made one with Him in spirit -- which is an eternal, resurrection union. All of the power of death and of Satan cannot break this spiritual union that believer have with Jesus Christ. It cannot break that union because that union is the result of victory over death and Satan. In other words, the

victory is already won. You don't need to win it again – you never need to cover that ground again.

So, when you are saved, you are joined to the Lord and made one spirit with Him – and this is HOW Christ is in you. Christ is in you – individually; personally; one on one. How many understand, and it is so simple and so foundational, and yet so easily forgotten, that if Christianity is, “Christ IN YOU, the hope of glory – then, by definition, God is ALWAYS present with you? By definition, Christianity is spiritual union with God by Jesus Christ. Thus, there is no such thing as a Christian with whom God is not ALWAYS present. How many understand that if God is not with you, you are not saved? If you are saved, then by definition God is eternally with you, indeed, IN you.

Now, someone is going to say, “Gee, it certainly doesn't seem like God is with me much of the time.” I understand that and I agree – there are often times when it doesn't seem like God is present. But what does that tell us? It tells us that God is always speaking but we are not always hearing. There are reasons why we don't see or hear God. Sometimes it is willfulness and unbelief -- but much of the time it is just because we have not LEARNED how to hear. We don't know Him. So when God doesn't SEEM to be present it is NOT because God is not present. No. It may be because we presently have no eyes or ears for God. We still need to grow. The deficiency here is not with God, but with us.

So what do we gather from all of this? Well, we gather that you and I need to learn Christ. You and I need to learn how to hear God and to know Him. We need to come into an inward realization of God through His Son Jesus Christ. But if we do, it doesn't mean GOD will begin to speak to us. No, WE will begin to see and hear what God is already revealing – to all people and to us individually. God has always been there. He just needs to bring us along according to the Truth.

The Capacity to See and Hear

Now, it is vital to see that when the Bible talks about hearing God and seeing Jesus Christ, it is not speaking of emotions or feelings or anything having to do with our soul man. That is not what it is talking about. Neither is it talking about times when God could just burst in and make Himself known. When the Bible talks about learning Christ and discerning according to the spirit, it is speaking of a capacity and a knowing and a revelation that you and I were NOT born into this world possessing. You have to receive this capacity in the new birth from above -- and that is the only way you can possess it.

I should also add that if you are born from above that despite possessing the capacity to hear and see Jesus, it doesn't mean that these capacities will work automatically according to Truth. Why? Because God does not bypass our mind and our will. Truth is revealed to us – that is, God speaks in various ways. But we have to voluntarily embrace the Truth. And that will be very much dependent upon our heart. God is speaking all the time – but unless our heart is right WITH God we will not be able to hear Him according to HIS heart. Being ABLE to see and hear God does not mean we will necessarily do so.

Just as a newborn baby has to learn how to see and hear – and they have to learn what they are seeing and hearing -- so does a babe in Christ. This takes time and is a part of growth in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. What did Jesus say to Nicodemus? “Unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Then in 1 Corinthians 2, “The natural man cannot receive the things of God.” So the first step is that you have to be given the capacity to hear God. But that is never given independent of receiving the new birth in Christ. ALL of the capacities of the new creation in Christ are found solely in Christ. Thus, “you must be born from above.”

There are many today -- some COULD hear because they are born from above, and some CANNOT hear because they are not -- but there are many whom are under deception. They have become blinded to Christ and to the Truth. As a result, they are likewise blind to the real nature of walking with God in the spirit. Thus, instead of walking with God on the basis of His Son, they begin to walk on the basis of a substitute -- they will use emotions to try to contact God, or to sense God in their feelings. This really the soul, or psychic part of man's nature.

The natural, or soul man, has become widespread means of walking with God and discerning God for so many professing believers. You hear people on Christian TV say, "I just really sense the spirit of God in the studio today." Or they will say, "I really feel in my spirit..." -- as if FEELINGS mean anything. Most of the time when they say these things, it is baloney and heresy. I have heard them say, "I really feel in my spirit that there are a thousand people out there who need to give a thousand dollars." I would like to say to them, "I wish you felt in your spirit the magnitude of the heresy which you are preaching." But, see, they never feel that, do they?

The point is, if we MUST receive from above -- through the new birth in Jesus Christ -- all of the dimensions of life that make it possible for us to hear and to know God, then by definition these cannot be in our natural makeup. If they were, we would not need to receive them from above, would we? No. So, these things CANNOT be of our emotions; they cannot of our psychic abilities. There is nothing of God in those. The Spirit of God in Jesus Christ is OTHER THAN our natural man. You MUST receive Christ by the spirit from above -- from the outside of you, into you from the outside.

Jesus Christ did not come to supercharge your natural makeup so that you could hear God. He came to crucify it; to put away our natural religious man with all the emotions and the entire psychic ability and intellect. He put all of that into

the grave and declared it dead so that you and I could hear God by the spirit in Truth.

We need to get this straight. The capacity to see and hear and know Jesus Christ is not in our natural man -- nor is it deposited into our natural man when we are born again. It is not. God does not change our natural man into a, "receiver," if I can use that term, wherein through our emotions we can contact God; where now by our psychic ability we can contact God. No. All of this has no place in the new creation. We can know God and the Truth only if the capacity for that is first born into us from above through Jesus Christ. Then we must grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Himself. It is only if we are coming into an inward realization of Jesus Christ that we can begin to see and hear God.

God is Speaking in His Son

To gather this up, God is always speaking, God is always working. In the beginning we can't see or hear much but God is at work opening our eyes, and making our ears to hear, so we can see and hear the God who has always been speaking and always been working. Again, we are the ones who need to be brought back into fellowship with God. It is not God who needs to be begged and pleaded with to come down and speak and show Himself to us. No, our eyes and ears need to be opened to the God who has always been speaking.

Now, let's look at a couple of scriptures which verify what I am saying. Let's turn to Hebrews 1:1:

God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners spoke in times past unto the fathers by the prophets...

Now, note the contrast: God spoke in times PAST unto the fathers by the prophets –

**BUT in these LAST DAYS He has spoken unto us -- there's
the change -- IN A SON."**

If you look up the Greek in verse 2, you will find that it says that God has, in these last days, spoken to us SON-WISE. In other words, Jesus Christ is the language God is speaking to us today. To put it practically, the primary way God speaks to His children today is through an inward, ongoing revelation of Jesus Christ.

God's, "speaking to us Son-wise," is not so much leadings, or little nuggets here and there, or words of knowledge and visions, or a matter of God telling us to go here or there; do this or that. God could do that if He wants to -- but primarily God is revealing to us the Person of His Son. This is how God is speaking. And if we are hearing, it will cover all the rest -- because we are going to know Him. God is speaking Jesus.

That may not sound very exciting to most people, but I have to tell you this is how God primarily speaks today. That is exactly what is stated in this passage of Hebrews 1:1-2. Thus, unless we are coming into an increasingly greater realization of Jesus Christ, we aren't going to hear God. In fact, nine times out of ten if we did hear God, "speak words," to us -- the way people like to say He does -- we would not understand what He meant anyway. We would interpret it along the line of our own self-interest; our own pride; and it would do more harm than good. I believe absolutely that God can speak at any time and in any way He wants -- and of course it will always be the Truth He speaks; it is always going to be one hundred percent in harmony with scripture. But primarily God is speaking IN His people through an ongoing revelation of Christ.

Of course, God is not limited in His methods of speaking -- and He can use various vehicles to get across to us what He is trying to reveal. I have had lots of things like that. But in

the final analysis, when all is said and done, as you walk on with Jesus Christ, those kinds of outward, “speakings of God,” wherein He speaks a word to you, as people describe it, will become less and less of an occurrence. More and more you are going to be coming into an inward realization of Jesus Christ, who is the Word of God; who is the living Word of God. HE is what God is speaking. Jesus Christ is the Logos. He is the Word. Jesus Christ is the Truth -- the True Word, if you will. If you are coming into an inward realization of Jesus, it means that you are hearing the Jesus whom God is speaking.

If you are coming into an inward realization of Jesus Christ -- coming to truly know Him -- you are going to know the Truth when you hearing. You are going to begin to see God in ways that you never did before. But again, you won't need outward, ostentatious signs and wonders; you won't need feelings and emotions. Sure, you will have your emotional reactions. I am not discounting that, but they are not proof of anything and they are not the source of Truth. You will have your reactions -- but this will be spiritual and not of this world; not of man -- even though your natural man may react emotionally. This is nevertheless God speaking to us in His Son.

Now you will note that Hebrews 1:1-2 that does not say that God, once in a hundred years or so, speaks to us in His Son. Neither do these words limit what God says to the words of Jesus as recorded in the gospels -- although, of course, that is valuable, and all that God speaks will agree with that. But, this means what it says - God is speaking to us in His Son -- God is speaking SON-WISE.

To go back to what I said earlier, Christianity is, “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” (Col. 1:27) When you are saved, you are joined to the Lord and you become one spirit with Him. That is the beginning of a journey that is a constant unfolding of Christ in you in an inward way. If you will take the journey -- some will refuse -- God will be continually unfolding to you the

Jesus Christ who already dwells within you. This is His speaking -- it is the unfolding of Christ to you in an inward way. If you go on with God, your ears will begin to hear and understand what God is already speaking to you in Christ. God is speaking. We need to learn to hear.

Christ is ALL

A couple of other scriptures: Colossians 2:3, speaking of Jesus Christ says,

In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

If this is true, if in the Person of Christ -- who dwells in you and me -- are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge -- then unless we are coming into an inward realization of Christ we cannot know wisdom or knowledge because ALL of it is in Him.

Again, Jesus Christ you must first be united with Christ -- born again -- and then ALL that is IN Christ is in you. But note that a born-again believer never needs MORE of Jesus Christ; never needs MORE of God's Spirit; or another experience to add to Christ. No, IN Christ is everything -- and when you are saved, you receive ALL of Him. The Christian life is therefore simply a matter of coming into a realization of Him; of discovering Him -- and in doing so, discovering all that is in Him.

How many understand that you cannot be half born again? How many understand that when you are saved, you have ALL that God has for you? God has put everything He has for man IN HIS SON. This idea that you have to go on to receive a second experience in ADDITION to salvation in Christ is a lie, period. It is Satan's way of minimizing the greatness and the glory -- the finality and the completeness -- of Jesus Christ in a human being. If you begin believing that Christ in you -- the hope of glory -- isn't enough -- and that you must go on

and receive another experience, what are you saying? You are saying that you are NOT complete in Him, and that He is NOT enough. This denies scripture. And that may be just the beginning of error. The actual lives which emerge from a heresy like this is evidenced in the Charismatic movement -- and look at what the results of that have been.

In Colossians 2:9-10 it says:

For in Christ dwells all the fullness of deity bodily.

The KJV has the word, "godhead." There is no such word as, "godhead," in the New Testament Greek. The word is DIETY. Thus, in Christ dwelt all the fullness of DIETY, or all the fullness of GOD – in Christ dwelt everything that God is – howbeit in human form.

Col. 2:10 says:

And you are complete in Him.

The word for, "complete," means, "to be filled to the full." But notice: Believers are, "filled to the full," IN HIM; in Christ. Not, "filled to the full," with a second blessing; not with another experience; not by crying and pleading with God to give you more of Jesus or more of His Spirit. No. You are complete IN CHRIST – now you must go on to discover what is in Him.

So, God is speaking to us in His Son. He is revealing the Christ who dwells in us: "Christ in you, the hope of glory." God is bringing us into an inward, ongoing, progressive realization of the Christ -- with whom we are united in spirit. This is the, "speaking," that God is doing of His Son -- and it is the speaking that we need to learn to hear and see.

The Silence of God in Suffering

Now, I did share earlier that one of the ways that God builds our faith and brings us into an inward realization of Jesus Christ is by allowing us to abide under what seems to be silence. God usually will not give us any indication that He is there. God will usually work in this way because so that we will have the opportunity to believe Him despite the silence and thus grow in faith. Isn't it ironic that all the while we cry out for a sign or a wonder -- cry out for God to show us He is there so that we can believe -- that all the while God knows that this would hurt us in the long run? Despite our cries for a sign from God, it is His silence that gives us the greatest opportunity to develop true faith.

God wants us to discern Him. But there are many people today who can only hear signs and wonders. They can hear only voices, and leadings, and the like. All they can do is, "feel and sense in their spirit." This, to them, is how God is speaking and how God reveals Himself. But God is not going to affirm or humor us in that. He does not usually speak that way -- and He will bring us into situations where none of that stuff will work or get us through -- and it will be proven to us that we cannot get through on the basis of those things. Then, what will happen? Well, if we are open to God, then it will occur to us that we had it all wrong. We will begin to ask questions we never even thought to ask before. And this will be the first step to freedom and knowing Christ.

If we hang in there and go on with God, He will begin to teach us Christ. He will start to teach us what it really means to know Him and to walk in the spirit according to the Truth.

Most of us, in our natural lives, including our natural religious lives -- maybe even as professing Christians -- have been tuned into the frequency of our own religious flesh, emotions and psychic nature. We have thought that we were tuned into the right channel -- God's channel. But He has to prove to us that it is the wrong channel. A trial of faith will do that. Then

over the course of time, God can tune us in to His, “channel.” His channel is Jesus Christ.

I could turn to many places in the Bible which are illustrations of God seeming to be silent -- seeming to be absent -- but wherein God uses His very silence to bring people to the knowledge of Jesus. I could talk about the saints of old like Abraham, to whom God promised a son -- and he had to wait 26 years. I could talk about Moses having to wait 40 years before his calling as the deliverer of Israel was confirmed and executed. I could speak of the fact that David had to wait all those years, while fleeing from Saul in the wilderness, before he could come into kingship. I could talk about the fact that Joseph was in prison -- even though he had a promise of God. I can guarantee that most of those years, for all of those saints, were spent in silence. The Bible says so. They could not hear God, and God didn't choose to speak to them in any kind of a outward way through a sign or a wonder. Nevertheless, God used all of that to bring them to where they could see and hear Him -- and have true faith and relationship built INTO them.

I could turn to any one of those examples, but the one I do want to turn to is probably the best one -- which is the example of Job. Now I don't have a whole lot of time, so I can't go over the Book of Job in detail. I gave a whole series on that a number of months ago if anyone is interested.

Let me just say that if you read the beginning of the book of Job, you will find God pronouncing a commendation upon Job as being a good and upright man. In fact, we see later that when Job was plunged into his great trial by God's permission, that God said, “Satan, you moved Me against Job without cause.” In other words, nothing about Job's trial was a punishment for sin. Job was living according to the will of God that he then understood. But God saw that there was a whole lot more that He wanted to reveal to Job about Himself. He wanted to build Job's faith and bring him on into another

dimension. That could not happen without these trials. And so God allowed Satan access to Job -- not for the purpose of punishing Job -- but unto the purpose of bringing him on into a greater and deeper relationship with God Himself.

So, all of these terrible things happened to Job. Of course, Job was clueless about why God would allow these things to happen to him. In fact, Job's knowledge of God at the time was both limited, and faulty. He believed that if you obeyed God and did His will, blessings from Him would be the result. If you did not obey God and went your own way, not only would the blessings be withheld, but Job and his friends believed that God would bring calamity upon you and punish you. This is what they believed and you can see that all the way through the text.

But the trial of Job absolutely dashed to pieces all of that religious thinking. Despite the fact that Job had obeyed God in every way that he knew -- God had said so -- Job did not receive blessings. Rather, Job had calamities and curses come upon him. This did not agree with his present knowledge of God. In fact, it shattered it.

Job's circumstances and suffering contradicted everything he believed about God. This put Job into a position of confusion, fear, and desperation. He could not hear, see or understand the Lord -- not on the basis that he once did. He could not find an answer from God through thinking, reasoning, begging, or pleading. He could not seem to find God at all. He did not know where he had sinned. He did not understand how God could be faithful. He was suffering greatly. And God was silent.

How many understand that emotions will not get you through a trial of faith? Thinking won't get you through a trial of faith. No argument, going back and forth around the same mountain a hundred times, will get you through a trail of faith. There is only one thing that will bring you through a trial of faith: You

have to see Jesus Christ. God puts us into these trials so that, over the course of time, if we will keep seeking God, we may come to the end of our efforts and of ourselves and begin to have an inward realization of Jesus Christ -- and begin to see Him. Then, and only then, we will realize that we do not need INFORMATION. What we need and will have received is REVELATION.

Most of us are exactly like Job before these trials. We usually believe exactly what Job believed - if we do well it will result in blessing. And if we don't, we are going to lose out. We tend to believe this whether we call it legalism, or whether we realize it is self-righteousness. It is sort of built into the nature of man in his approach towards God. But it is not the Truth. It is deception. Thus, God has to shatter all of it. He has to bring into a situation which cannot be accounted for, or dealt with, by that kind of a religious formula. And when He does, we are going to ask exactly what Job asked: "Why? Why has this happened?" And God will likely be silent. Therein is the trial of faith.

You will never think your way through to the answer. You can't feel your way, cry your way, or scream bloody murder and find the answer. The only answer to the question, "Why?" is to see God. But that is exactly the answer to WHY? God has allowed this suffering and trial of faith to bring us to the point – not of information – but of revelation – a revelation of God Himself in Christ.

As we begin to come into an inward revelation of Jesus Christ, we begin to discover that the reason for our great trial had nothing to do with our works. The reason for our trial had nothing to do with something we did do, or did not do. I am not saying that God never uses our works as a part of the trial. I am just saying that our works are not the reason or cause for our trial – our trial of faith is not a punishment for what we may have done or not done. Our trial of faith is so that we must STOP looking at our works, and begin looking unto Jesus –

our trial of faith is unto the end that Christ be revealed in us and we might be built up in faith in HIM.

Neither is the answer to our trial figuring out what to do now. How many times, when we are in trials, do we say to God, "Lord, if You would just tell me what to do, I would do it. If You would just explain this to me?" But God is silent. Do we seriously believe that if God wanted us to do something or stop doing something – that if this were the answer to our trial – that God would stubbornly withhold that from us? No. The answer is not to do the right thing, or this thing, or that thing -- the answer is to lose your entire life into the hands of Jesus Christ.

How many understand that if we have not done that – lose our lives to Jesus -- that it is not going to matter in the long run what you do, right or wrong? You are not going to get far with God. You have to surrender yourself to Jesus. Do we want to know what to DO in a trial? Believe and trust God. Give yourself to Him. That is what God is after. We can make the commitment any time to lose ourselves to Christ by asking God to do whatever it takes to bring us through the trial. But it is nevertheless going to take awhile for us to learn Jesus Christ. It is going to take awhile for us to come into a realization of Him and to understand what it really means to lose ourselves into His hands. That is a part of endurance and patience. So, it is not a matter of doing this or that thing, the right or the wrong thing. It is a matter of living out from the right Person, Jesus Christ, by faith -- rather than living out from our old man.

Well, I need to proceed here very quickly. Job was a good and upright man -- God said so. But even so, Job was plunged into all of these calamities and wanted to know WHY. If you read the Book of Job, you will find that God did not at first come and show Himself to Job and give him answers. No, despite the fact that Job wanted information as to why he was in the trial. I can identify with that, can't you? But God was

saying to Job -- as Jesus said to the nobleman in John 4, "I am not going to give you what you want. I am not going to give you information -- because information will do nothing to help you." Again, Job did not need information. He needed a revelation and a realization of God Himself.

Jesus Christ is the Answer

If we turn to the end of the Book of Job, we can see the great purpose of God being accomplished through this horrible trial of Job. Notice Job's confession at the end of the Book of Job, beginning in chapter 42:1:

Then Job answered the Lord and said, "I know that You can do everything and that no thought can be withheld from You."

Then he says, at the end of verse 3:

"Therefore I confess that I have uttered what I understood not; I have spoken things too wonderful for me which I knew not."

Notice what Job is confessing here. He is saying that he had a whole bunch of head knowledge -- a lot of theological knowledge. He said, "I spoke the right things, God -- and even You said I did." (If we read in verse 8 of chapter 42, God says that Job spoke that which was right of Him.) So Job is saying, "God, I spoke the Truth about You. I spoke the facts; I spoke the right doctrines." But Job is confessing, "But what I spoke was beyond me. There was more to You than I could ever have imagined."

Why is Job confessing this? What has brought him to this realization -- to the realization he had spoken the correct facts -- but that they were too wonderful for him? What brought him to this is that HE SAW GOD. He saw the Person about whom he had spoken.

How many understand that seeing Jesus Christ changes everything -- because it changes US? Job says in verses 5-6:

“I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees YOU. Therefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.”

From this we learn that any one of us could know the right Bible verses; any one of us could piece together theological concepts and develop a belief system. There are Christians who do this and do it quite well. They can spend their whole lives living in that and nothing more. But this is not equal to SEEING JESUS CHRIST.

Job was admitting, “I was so completely blind that I did not know I was blind. I did not need to see the answers to my trial. I needed to see God. I needed to do more than piece together theological tenants about God. I needed to see the Lord Himself.” Job had now come into a realization of God Himself. For us, of course, in the New Testament, it is an inward realization of Jesus Christ -- which is what it means to have Christ formed in you. (Gal. 4:19)

In a trial of faith we ask God, “Why?” We ask God, “Why?, because we cannot see Him and we cannot hear Him. God would say to us, “You keep asking me, “Why?” God would then say to us, “I am not going to give you that information. I have something greater to give to you than an answer to your questions. I have my Son to give you.” In short, instead of speaking to us an answer, God wants to speak to us in His Son. He wants to use the trial to reveal Christ in us.

If we will abide under these trials of silence, we will come into an inward realization of Jesus Christ. We will see and hear things that we never knew -- because now we are seeing and hearing HIM. We will see and hear THE WORD that God is speaking to us – God is speaking an ongoing revelation of His Son. How many understand that this Word is not only is much

better but it is God's purpose? What good would it do for us in the long run if God immediately gave us the answer to the question, "Why?" In that case we might have an answer. But God would not have us.

Well, this is what God wants to do in our lives. It is why, very often, that He will not give us a sign or a wonder. He will very often not give us an outward indication or proof that He is with us. He will most often not speak to us in some kind of overt, outward way. Instead, what He will do is be silent -- which is intended to bring us into an inward realization of His Son. If you and I come into an inward realization of Jesus Christ, He will be real. This will be eternal; He will be the basis of everything God has for you. God knows what He is doing.

So faith, when God is silent, is all unto this great purpose of God -- which is that we may come into an inward realization of Jesus Christ. As Jesus said in John 16 -- when the child -- Jesus Christ -- is born in us and begins to be known to us and by us, then, in that day, we will no longer ask Him any questions. Jesus will be our answer.