

Why Is God Silent?

By Ronald L. Dart

Why is God silent to us? I know there are would-be prophets who claim they speak for God, had a vision from God, or had a dream. But I have learned these kinds of people are mostly frauds; I certainly know if they don't speak in agreement with the Bible, God has not sent them. I have even had some of them try to tell me things about myself. But they always miss and, therefore, I know they're not talking for God. I don't think God is coy. I don't think He is shy. But I think He doesn't care to repeat Himself. That said, there are times I know I wish we could get a more direct answer, or at least we think we would. David seems to have felt that way more than once. In the 28th Psalm, he cries out and says: "To You I will cry, O Lord my Rock: Do not be silent to me, lest, if You are silent to me, I become like those who go down to the pit. Hear the voice of my supplications when I cry to You, when I lift up my hands toward Your holy sanctuary. Do not take me away with the wicked and with the workers of iniquity, who speak peace to their neighbors, but evil is in their hearts." (Psalm 28:1-3, NKJV).

I can understand the cry, and I have thought about the workers of iniquity who speak peace to their neighbors but mischief is in their hearts. Christians tend to be naïve and trusting, and we trust people without giving much thought as to whether we ought to trust them or not. The Israelis, perhaps identifying more with David, realized that people who speak peace, often as not, don't mean what they say. So, what should you do? Well, that is simple. Pay more attention to what they do than what they say. David went on in his prayer: "Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavors; give them according to the work of their hands; render to them what they deserve. Because they do not regard the works of the Lord, nor the operation of His hands, He shall destroy them and not build them up." (Psalm 28:4-5, NKJV).

Always hopeful, David ended his psalm on an upbeat note. He said: "Blessed be the Lord, Because He has heard the voice of my supplications! The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in Him, and I am helped; therefore my heart greatly rejoices, and with my song I will praise Him. The Lord is their strength, and He is the saving refuge of His anointed. Save Your people, and bless Your inheritance; shepherd them also, and bear them up forever." (Psalm 28:6-9, NKJV).

What a great way he had of putting things. We seem to be living in a long period of God's silence. Why do you think that might be, and what might He say to us if He decided not to keep silent? Actually, it's that second question that might give us pause. When

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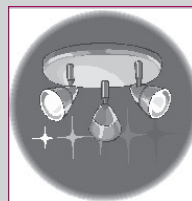
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Scripture Spotlight

"In this manner, therefore, pray:
Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be
Your name. Your kingdom come.
Your will be done on earth as it is in

heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen" (Matthew 6:9-13 NKJV).

Honoring Parents – Part II

By David Havir III

Honoring your parents sounds simple enough. In the last newsletter, I posed the question regarding how this works once actual people are involved. Let's look at some tough questions on this topic. As an adult, how do you honor a parent who won't stay out of your business? Or worse, how do you honor a parent that is, or has been, abusive? How do you honor that parent when they want to spend time with your own kids?

This topic is complex. There are a variety of opinions and interpretations of Scripture when it comes to this matter. This topic is one that I have spent a lot of time thinking about, praying about, and studying about.

I am often asked by younger adults how you honor your parents after you turn 18, especially if the parent doesn't recognize your new-found autonomy. It can be hard for a parent to make that adjustment. It's more difficult than just flipping a switch. In these situations, I think it is important to focus on how much autonomy the young adult is actually utilizing. For example, if a parent is paying for college, the parent has some say in whether or not the student can drop a class. We can have the argument about gift giving and strings attached, but why even go down that road? I worked my tail off to pay for my own college because I wanted that autonomy. It doesn't make that the right decision for every college student. But it was the right decision for me. And I still honored my parents by not being rude and by listening to their advice. But the decisions were mine. I was fortunate because my parents understood this concept. I know not every parent sees it this way. But I think this is an important concept because of the bigger picture. Autonomy is important.

What about the Scriptures that say that I must obey? I know they are there. Reading from Ephesians: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother,' which is the first commandment with a promise: that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.' And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord." (Ephesians 6:1-4, NKJV).

It definitely tells children to obey their parents. But two things jump out at me. We are to obey when our parents are in the Lord. What does that mean? I take it to mean to obey when it is in congruence with the

teachings of God and Christ. Again, it is possible to honor them without obeying them. When push comes to shove, on that Day of Judgment before God and Christ, I'm going to be held accountable for what I know and what I did. "Because my mommy and daddy told me to" is not going to hold up before God.

The second part of that verse is the command for the parent. We are not to provoke our children to wrath, much less abuse them. Are we required to stick it out in an abusive situation? I think there is a pertinent example in the Bible of someone who did not stick around when faced with an abusive situation. While it might not be a parental situation, David was supposed to honor King Saul as Saul was God's anointed king at the time. But Saul wanted to harm David. And David got out of dodge.

The last situation deals with when we have our own kids. A survivor of an abusive parental situation is commanded to forgive, not to forget. We are told to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. If you knowingly put your own child at risk in the name of honoring your parents, a verse I quoted in the last newsletter applies: "But if anyone does not provide for his own, especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." (I Timothy 5:8, NKJV).

For me, providing for his own isn't just about food, clothes, and shelter. It is providing a safe environment for our children. If you knowingly put your children in a situation that allows the child to be abused, that makes the parents just as responsible as the abuser. We are to protect and help those who aren't able to help themselves.

I want to end with the words of Jesus. Although we are supposed to honor our parents, they are not supposed to be the focal point of our lives. Let's look at a passage from Matthew: "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;' and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.' He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it." (Matthew 10:34-39, NKJV).

Are We Silent?

By David Havir III

Do you ever ask the question why is God silent? He spoke directly to individuals in Biblical times but I don't see a lot, if any, of that happening today. Ron Dart's article in this newsletter addresses this topic. But I have a related question that I want to ask: are we silent?

It's easy to point the finger at others, including God, when things aren't going our way. It's human nature to look outwardly instead of inwardly. We need to combat that nature. Instead of focusing on the way God communicates with us, let's take some time to focus on the way we communicate with Him. How often do we pray? And, if we are praying, what kind of prayers or communication do we have with Him?

Let's start with the words of Jesus concerning the model prayer: "And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him." (Matthew 6:5-8, NKJV).

When I was a child, I used to think that just ending a prayer with "amen" wasn't enough. It felt like I needed more. I remember when I first read this verse. Sometimes, things jump off the page as if they were specifically written for you. This passage, coupled with the passage in Chapter 5 about your "yes" being "yes" and your "no" being "no," really struck a chord with me personally. We don't need all the extra verbiage. Our word is supposed to mean something, in everyday life as well as in prayer.

Do you think this passage forbids praying in public? Most people would say no because we still pray in our churches. But I have a confession. When I was younger, I took this passage out of context. When I would see a family praying over their meal at a restaurant, there was a part of me that felt that they should be doing that in

private. I mean, this Scripture tells us to! But is that the point of the verse?

Additionally, in the Scripture Spotlight on the first page, we highlighted verses nine through 13, or the Model Prayer. Many churches preach that this is exactly how you should pray. And it's pretty easy to back up that claim. I mean, they are using the words of our Savior. But is that the right approach? Or is there more to the story?

Based on examples in the Bible, I think this is just the basis to start from. I think that God wants us to have a dialogue with Him. Yes, He knows our thoughts and our wishes, but He wants us to tell Him. If all we do is recite the words from Matthew 6, is that a relationship with him? Or, can the eloquent words of Jesus be turned into vain repetition?

I gave a sermon recently about going through the motions. I confessed in that sermon that it is easy for my mind to wander while I pray during services, especially if I pray on a day that I am giving a sermon. It is easy to start planning ahead and not be focused on what I am doing. Is that really a prayer? Am I really even talking to God at that point? Or, am I just standing in a synagogue like the hypocrites?

One major theme in the New Testament is about having a personal relationship with God. That's why prayer is so important. It isn't about God being a genie in a bottle who grants wishes. That relationship must be based on us communicating our thoughts, our feelings, and our fears. The conversations with God in the psalms aren't rote. They are heartfelt and passionate. They are respectful, but they sometimes express uncertainty as to God's plan. And I think that is okay. I want to be careful about speaking for God, but it isn't too much of a leap to think that God is okay with it too. Otherwise, I don't think they would be included in the Bible.

As with most things, I think the answer here is to evaluate ourselves. We need to make sure that we are doing what we are supposed to be doing. God will express Himself the way He sees fit. And He expects us to express ourselves to Him in the manner that He has commanded, because He honestly wants a real relationship with each and every one of us. And that relationship is forged through prayer!

Working For Free

By Jim O'Brien

Would you go to work if you didn't get paid? I thought of that when a friend told me he spent the day installing insulation in his daughter's attic. This was more striking because he owns a construction company and employs other men to do the same job simply because it's so distasteful to him. He will pay other men to do work he detests yet he does it for free for his daughter.

It's part of human nature to do what we love without payment. For example, a lot of people wouldn't take a job changing diapers—there's not enough money to pay me to do it—but I changed hundreds, or thousands, on my children and grandchildren.

The German philosopher Fredrick Schiller wrote, "We are never our authentic selves so fully as when at play." What a strange thing to say, and yet it is no more strange than performing a task for free when you wouldn't do it for a salary.

"We are never our authentic selves so fully as when at play."

By chance, I once met a man who was a renowned artist. He showed me through his studio filled with incredible works of art he had painted. He told me he had attended medical school and quit during his final year, turning his back on a lucrative career as a doctor, to pursue something risky. He realized as he reached the end of the program that his fascination with the human body was painting it rather than medicating it. He specialized in portraits, and medical school taught him about the skeletal and muscular structure which made him a better artist. "Most people paint what they see," he told me, "but I learned the structure of the body to paint what is not seen." His talent earned him an invitation to live at the residence of the Prince of Wales for six months to paint his portrait.

Choice is the heart of freedom that allows men to do great things. Albert Einstein wasn't forced by a government to create his theories. He chose what he loved. So it was with all of the great patriarchs of the Bible. No church or church leader could force the Apostle Paul to endure beatings, stoning, and hunger. He chose what he loved.

Schiller's point is that there is nothing that so clearly reveals what is in a man's heart as what he chooses to do when he is free.

The same man who has a hard time getting up in time for work at 9:00 a.m. will be in the field to hunt deer before sun-up. And there is no need to call him twice to get out of bed. He is willing to forsake his \$3,000 mattress to sleep on the ground in a cold tent and spend the day in a tree stand waiting for the deer to emerge from hiding.

Why will a man suffer these hardships? Because it gives him joy. He will spend money, forget work responsibilities, leave important tasks undone until he returns, forsake comfort, and do what he loves when he is free.

The "spirit" within us expresses itself most fully when we do something for the sheer intrinsic worth of the activity itself and not anything external to it. It is the great blessing of a free-market economy and the great curse of socialism. The latter inevitably kills the spirit.

After Moses' death, Joshua took Israel into the Promised Land and told them what God expected of them now that they were a free nation. God wanted them to respond with the spirit that an artist or musician brings to his work. "But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the LORD charged you, to love the LORD your God. . . to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul." (Joshua 22:5, KJV).

When Israel lost her freedom, as much as anything else, the cause could be traced to the loss of joy in her relationship to God. Moses had warned Israel that if you don't serve God ". . . with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; Therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies, which the LORD shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things. . ." (Deuteronomy 28:47-48).

Joy is an essential part of our worship of God. John Wesley once said, "Sour godliness is the devil's religion." He was right! The grim-faced evangelists of the devil want to take the heart out of worship. Don't let them do it. God set you free so you could worship Him in joyfulness and gladness of heart.

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we ask for God not to be silent, we ought to think: wait, do I really want to hear what He has to say? The thing about David and other kings of Israel is that they had recognized and reputable prophets to speak for God. The Bible was being written in their day, so they needed that kind of thing. It seemed odd to me when I thought about David, who was a man after God's own heart, that God never spoke to him personally. God spoke to him through a prophet at all times. When He did speak, David might have wished He hadn't, because God doesn't see any need to speak to us when we are doing well. I have often said this. If you see a prophet walking down the road to your house, it is bad news. God doesn't send a prophet to pat you on the head and say, "Oh, what a good boy you are. You are doing so well." When we are doing well, God just looks at us and says we are doing what we are supposed to do. So, our task is to just keep on keeping on. Another thing they did not have was the comprehensive Bible that we all have in hand today. If we call out to God, "Why are You silent to us?" as David did, He is apt to reply "I already spoke. Read the Bible." It calls to mind one of Jesus's parables. The one of Lazarus and the rich man. You may remember it. He said, "There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.'" (Luke 16:19-24, NKJV).

This was what the Pharisees believed was out there. So, Jesus used this to make His point. Continuing in verse 25, "But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this,

between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.' Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.'" (Luke 16:25-29, NKJV).

What an incredible statement he just made! Continuing in verse 30, "And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.'" (Luke 16:30, NKJV).

Abraham's reply is just devastating. "But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'" (Luke 16:31, NKJV).

I suppose we should take away from this parable a simple truth. God has already spoken to us. If we won't listen to the written testimony, God speaking to us, walking into our bedroom, appearing in an apparition above our bed or in our closet or wherever it may be is pointless. If you don't listen, you don't listen. We also, living in our generation, have an even more sure testimony than anything they had until Jesus came on the scene. The writer of Hebrews started his book this way: "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds." (Hebrews 1:1-2, NKJV).

We not only have Moses and the prophets, we have the Words of Jesus recorded by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. If a person won't listen to these, why would we think that God should speak to us and that we would listen to Him if He spoke? Actually, the testimony in the Bible says we wouldn't. Peter wrote in his second letter: "For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. And so we have the prophetic word

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confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.” (II Peter 1:16-19, NKJV).

This is testimony and the people to whom Peter was writing had not heard the voice that Peter had heard. They were supposed to take his word for it. He was testifying to them. If they wouldn't believe Peter's testimony, there was no point in Jesus appearing to them. Amos, one of the Old Testament prophets, warned us about one aspect of this: “ ‘Behold, the days are coming,’ says the Lord God, ‘That I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the Lord, but shall not find it.’” (Amos 8:11-12, NKJV).

There is a funny thing about this. How far do you have to look for a Bible? Chances are, you have one in your house, right on the coffee table or bookshelf. You don't have to go far to find the Bible. But people are looking for a more current message from God, something that is really up-to-date, something right up in our world today. And God isn't talking. Why should He? To hear the answer to this question, please request a *FREE* copy of *Why is God Silent?*

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Prepare for the Feast of Tabernacles 2017

Born to Win is pleased to be sponsoring two sites for the 2017 Feast of Tabernacles! The Feast of Tabernacles begins on the night of October 4th and goes through October 11th. Christian Educational Ministries will be sponsoring a Western Caribbean Cruise on board the Royal Caribbean International vessel named *Liberty of the Seas!* The cruise will make stops in Cozumel, the Grand Caymans, and Jamaica. Services will be a mix of live speakers and the timeless message of Ronald L. Dart. We will be boarding the cruise out of Galveston, Texas, on October 8th and returning on October 15th. Due to the nature of cruise bookings, information on sites in and around Galveston where individuals can attend the first few days of the Feast will be available soon. Two different rates have been negotiated based on room type. Interior rooms can be booked at \$676.50 per person. Balcony rooms can be booked at \$926.50 per person. These include great meals, taxes, and port fees.

Christian Educational Ministries will also be co-sponsoring the Super Feast Site at Land Between The Lakes/Kentucky Dam Village State Resort Park. Whether you are young or mature, the Super Site strives to ensure that no one is left out or lonely at the Feast. In addition to daily services, seminars and youth classes will be offered! Daily activities will also be scheduled in an effort to promote a joyful atmosphere and to make it very special for all. Details regarding housing, seminars, youth classes, and activities will be made available soon.

If you are interested in the cruise or in Land Between The Lakes, please call us at 1-888-BIBLE-44 or email us at david@borntowin.net. Hurry before time runs out on both of these truly edifying opportunities!

Born to Win

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That the man of God may be proficient and equipped for every good work.