

God seems to be silent. He isn't hearing my pleas, or it seems that way to me. I've been asking God for years, to bring my spouse around to faith in Jesus, and that my spouse comes to church with me. No response. Try again. I've been asking God for years to bring my prodigal child back to church. No response. Try again. I've been asking God for years to give me a better marriage. No response. Try again. I've been asking God for years to heal the wounds of my past. But they still torment me. Try again. I've been asking God for years to provide me physical healing from this illness that I or a family member has to deal with. But the health problems continue to linger. God are you there? Where are you God? Are you really involved in the affairs of this universe, or are you just an uninterested observer?

Maybe you even wonder in times of reflection, "Am I the problem? Is God mad at me? Is it because I don't have enough faith? Do my prayers even matter? And maybe, if we are brutally honest, we are sometimes filled with resentment. We see other people have their prayers answered, or other people who don't even know Jesus who don't have to face the same problems that you are facing. And in desperation, you cry out, "It's not fair!"

In our study for today we have a human being going through this type of turmoil. Tragedy, dark days. His name is Job. We see him, confused, angry, resentful, depressed, and trying to get some answers. In one day he lost 7000 sheep, 3000 camels, 5000 oxen, 500 donkeys, all his servants were killed, and then the crowning blow was that all 10 of his kids were killed in a freak accident. Shortly thereafter, He lost his health, and his entire body from the bottom of his feet to the top of his head was covered in boils. Over night, one of the most wealthy, well-respected, and righteous men on earth was reduced to nothing. So devastating were these circumstances that his wife's only advice was for Job to curse God and die.

The book of Job is all about one question in life: Will a person continue to worship God if he loses everything? Will a person continue to follow and love God if everything goes wrong in his life? Let me make that personal. Would you? Would you continue to follow God, to trust God, to love God, if everything went wrong in your life?

That is the ultimate test of faith. And I want to tell you at some point in your life you're going to go through that test. Guaranteed. You're going to go through a time when it looks like everything in your life is going wrong. And God's going to watch and see will you still trust Him. Will you still trust Him when the bottom, the rug's pulled out from under you? Will you trust Him when it does not make sense? It's chaotic. You're crushed. There's a tragedy. This is the ultimate test of faith because not all your prayers in life are going to be answered the way you want them to be answered and in the timetable that you want.

Today, I want to encourage all Christians to hang in there. To continue to fight the good fight of faith. That even though the skies are dark, God is still carrying out his good purposes for you. Actually, "God Speaks to us from the Storm!"

How would you react if someone came to your place of employment, who has zilch for experience, and began to tell you how to do your job? You'd say, The nerve of that guy or gal. They act like they know what they're talking about, and they haven't the foggiest idea. So it can be said in our relationship with God and our life on this earth. We think we have it figured out. We should get married at this age. We will have this many children. We will live to a ripe age of 90. We will have great health until then. Our death will be quick and painless.

But then the story changes, tragedy strikes. Plug in your tragedy. God, we say, this is a mistake. You don't know what you are doing here. I want you to explain this to me, and do it now. "God says, now wait a minute. I am not obligated to explain myself to you. My wisdom and power is so much above yours. Don't tell me how to run the universe. Remember, I am the architect who planned every detail of the creation of this universe. I am the surveyer who measured the lines and dimensions, and I am the engineer who sank the footings and laid the cornerstone. Were you there to give me input and direction? If you weren't around at the creation of the world, how can you dispute with me or sit judgment over the way I am

conducting the affairs of this world. “Look at how I set up the ocean systems with its tides. I have fixed a limit beyond which the waters cannot go. Please don’t tell me how to run this universe!”

God controls the mighty waters of the ocean more easily than you and I can turn on a water faucet or fill the bathtub. He is all powerful, brilliant. You think you know more than He does? What was God’s point? God was reminding Job that he was just a human being, and that there are certain things that are beyond Job’s understanding. Job was considered to be a very wise man during his day, but even Job didn’t understand everything about God. Job needed to humble himself, and to submit himself to a God who does things that are beyond understanding. “Don’t try to understand me,” God was telling Job. “Just trust me. Respect me. Honor me.”

And so it is with you and me. When things happen in your life, and it looks like God doesn’t know what he is doing, remember, God is wise. God does things that are beyond your understanding. When he lets things happen to you that you don’t like, things that seem completely illogical, completely unfair, completely pointless, how do you react? Do you get so angry you want to put up your dukes and fight God.

Don’t fight God. Fight the temptation to complain about God. Fight the temptation to disrespect God. Fight the temptation to shake your fist in the air at God and tell him that he doesn’t know what he is doing. Fight those temptations, and humble yourself before a God that does things that are beyond your understanding. You see, Job had no idea what was going on behind the scenes. He had no idea that Satan was trying to cause him to disown God. He had no idea that God was standing up for him, that God was proving his faith to Satan. Job had no idea that God was using this situation to strengthen his faith. Job had no idea that God was planning to restore his health and give him more than he had had before. Job had no idea.

You and I have no idea what is going on behind the scenes either. You have no idea what kinds of conversations Satan has with God about you. You have no idea when Satan is trying to cause you to disown God. You have no idea when God is testing your faith – it just happens out of the blue. And you have no idea how God plans to resolve your problems in the future. My friend, if you have ever complained to God, or accused him of not knowing what he’s doing, then I invite you today to repent. In your mind, confess that sin to God, and let him forgive you. That’s ultimately what Job did. In the last chapter of this book, Job said, “Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know...therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.” Then God forgave Job and restored him.

This morning, let God forgive you. If there was ever a time when it looked like God didn’t know what he was doing, that moment at the cross was probably it. How could God let his Son die on a cross? How could God let him suffer this way? God is unfair! God is unjust! I’m sure the disciples of Jesus struggled with these thoughts as they watched Jesus die. But then Jesus rose, and revealed to his disciples and to the world that God knows what he is doing. That moment at the cross was God’s way of taking away your sin. That’s why God can look at you today and call you his child. That’s why you are forgiven, and why you’re going to heaven. It’s because God did something that seemed completely wrong, but actually, it was the most loving, the most righteous thing ever done in the history of all mankind.

When you feel like a “modern day Job,” when things are happening to you and you don’t know why, when you feel completely baffled by what is happening in your life, those are times to trust. Don’t try to understand. Don’t try to argue with God. Just trust. Trust that God is wise. Trust that he knows what you are going through, and he knows what he is doing. Trust that he is loving, and that he won’t leave you hanging out to dry. This is the same God who is so wise and so loving that he figured out a way to take away your sins and give you eternal life. He is a God that you can trust.

So friend, don't mistake silence on the part of God as absence. Because of Calvary, God is with us. He is for us. His Son, Jesus promises, "Lo, I will be with you always, even unto the end of the world." You see what God has done, is he has purged Job and us of our pride. He has shown us what puny human beings we are in comparison to Him. He brings us to realize our helplessness, and deep need for his help and support. It is His intent through this whole process to lead us to trust Him more firmly.

In Jeremiah 29:11 God says, "*I have good plans for you, not plans to hurt you. I will give you hope and a good future.*" You may think that what God is doing in your life right now is painful and is to no avail but God says, "My plan is good. You just don't see it. You need to trust Me. You need to have hope because it's a plan to give you a hope and a future."

We have some members of our church who are modern-day Jobs. Sometime ago one of them shared this passage with me from Proverbs 3:5 which says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding"

In Job 23 verse 10 Job says, "But He knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold." I like Job's words. He knows the way I take. My situation has not caught God off guard. My prayer request didn't surprise him. He can be trusted. He is God. My friends, you are not going to get an explanation here on this earth, as to why certain things have happened to you. In fact, some things in this world are not going to be explained until you get to the other side. When you get to heaven you're going to look back and God's going to show you why things happened the way they did. But you're not going to know now. So don't wait for an explanation. Just praise God in spite of the circumstances. Trust His ways are best.

That brings us to our final point. Keep an eternal perspective as you view your dark days. Job says in chapter 19, "in the end He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God." Job is saying, even if my life remains dark and my skin gets destroyed, there is a day coming when-in the flesh- I will see God. God may seem silent now. The heavens may appear closed. But I haven't lost hope. I'm not relying on feelings. I am relying on the truth that I know about God. When its all said and done, when God sets his feet on the earth at the end of time, I will be there and see Him. All will be well at that point. No more dark days.

So when you are tempted to give up, keep praying. God has not abandoned you. When you don't understand, keep praying. Someday you will understand God's purposes. Remember the dark days are all temporary. Trust in God's control and purpose for your life. Keep your chin up! May God grant to each one of us that kind of faith, a faith that doesn't always demand answers, but trusts. Join the prophet Habakkuk with his words from chapter 3 verse 17, "Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior." Amen.