

WHEN GOD IS SILENT

**(For Those Who Are in the Shadows
Struggling with the Silence of God)**

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INTRODUCTION

At times during our pilgrim journey, we all experience the silence of God. God's silence in our lives never means he has forsaken us. Nor does it mean that we should forsake Him.

Faithfulness during the times of God's silence is the message of this book. It is written for common, everyday, ordinary believers, not theologians; no claim is made for literary excellence. For maximum edification and insight, please read and study all of the scriptural references. Obviously, this is not the final word; the subject is illimitable.

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THE SILENCE OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Job (Book of Job)

We clearly see the silence of God in the life of Job. The physical afflictions of Job were numerous: inflamed, ulcerous sores (Job 2:7), itching (2:8), changes in his facial skin (2:7, 12). (At this point in his life, his three friends did not recognize him and they could not speak for seven days (2:11-13).) He also experienced loss of appetite (3:14), depression (3:24-25), loss of strength (6:11), worms in the boils (7:5), running sores (7:5), difficulty breathing (9:18), darkness under the eyes (16:16), foul breath (19:17), loss of weight (19:20; 33:21), continual pain (30:17), restlessness (30:17), peeling skin (30:30), and fever (30:30).

As we study the entire book of Job, we learn that Job is never told why he went through his various trials and difficulties. The later section of the book does tell us that Job repented (43:6) and the Lord “blessed the later end of Job more than his beginning...” (42:12). Job did learn that God was a sovereign God. However, nowhere in the book did God ever reveal to Job why he suddenly lost his sons and daughters, his wealth, and his health. Never was he told why he experienced all of this.

We clearly see the silence of God in the life of Job.

Joseph (Genesis 37:20-28)

Joseph's life is familiar. His brothers said, "Come now therefore, and let us slay him..." (Genesis 37:20); "and they took him and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it" (37:24). "Then there passed by Midianite merchantmen, and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver; and they brought Joseph into Egypt" (37:28). At this time the Lord did not reveal to Joseph the why of all this. At this particular time, God was silent in the life of Joseph.

The little Unnamed Girl (2 Kings 5:1, 2)

What a compelling passage this is! A little unnamed Jewish girl is kidnapped literally. She was taken from her home, friends, comfort, care, and counsel of her beloved parents. Imagine how her parents must have felt! Imagine how she must have felt!

Here in this passage we once again clearly notice the silence of God. Obviously, we see the hand of God. The Lord used this little unnamed Jewish girl to bring about the physical and spiritual healing of an outstanding man of his day, Naaman, the leper (2 Kings 5:14, 15).

Was all of this revealed to the little unnamed girl and her parents when she was taken captive by the foreign soldiers? Surely not!

THE SILENCE OF GOD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

John the Baptist (Matthew 14:1-12)

The beheading of John the Baptist is well known. “And his disciples came and took up the body and buried it and went and told Jesus” (Matthew 14:12). The Bible never tells us what Jesus told them. Once again, we see the silence of God.

Why? How could this happen to such a one as John the Baptist? Of all people, John the Baptist. A man who Jesus described as “among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist” (Luke 7:28).

The murderers were: Herod, a very wicked man, and Herodias, a very wicked woman. Herod was an adulterer and Herodias was an adulteress. These were the people who were responsible for the death of John the Baptist. How could he meet such a horrible, gruesome, and unjustified end at the hands of such terrible and revolting people?

No answer is given. Another example of the silence of God.

James (Acts 12:1-2)

James, a choice servant of the Lord and leader in the New Testament Church, was cruelly murdered by an abominable, heartless, and barbarous politician. Once again: the silence of God.

Church at Smyrna (Revelation 2:8-11)

The members of the church at Smyrna faced imprisonment, tribulation, and death. No earthly deliverance is promised to these faithful followers of the Lord Jesus. Once again: the silence of God.

Timothy (1 Timothy 5:23)

In this passage, we discover this truth in a very practical, down-to-earth way. We learn much from this passage. First, Paul is writing to a man (1 Timothy 6:11) specifically referred to as a man of God. Timothy was a godly man. Second, the wine was to be used in a medicinal way. Third, in reference to the wine, the emphasis is on, “a little” (A.T. Robertson: *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. 4, p. 590). Fourth, Timothy was sick frequently. “Often” is a word that is sometimes overlooked in this verse. In fact, A.T. Robertson commenting on this verse says, “Timothy was clearly a semi-invalid” (p. 590, Vol. 4, *Word Pictures*). Fifth, the word, “infirmities” or weaknesses clearly refers to his weak physical condition and his chronic illness.

Why didn't Paul heal Timothy through some miraculous power or gift that he possessed? After all, Timothy was a man of God (1 Timothy 6:11). Once again, we see the silence of God.

Timothy was not healed.

A few additional notes: First, God can, has, and does use many who are not in the best of health. Many people who are used greatly in the service of the Lord have not enjoyed the best of health. Second, according to this passage, it seems as though the signs, wonders, miraculous gifts, and healings had ceased. At least, they were silent in the life of Timothy and in the ministry of Paul at this particular time.

NOT ALWAYS EASY TO ACCEPT THE SILENCE OF GOD

Accepting God's silence is not always easy. Frequently, it is difficult and hard to accept. It is even complex and complicated. Why doesn't the Lord help me: Right now, immediately? Why can't I see the complete picture right now?

Job's friends (Job 42:7-8)

Please read this passage carefully: "My wrath..." (Job 42:7-8).

Job's friends, according to this passage, accused him of some things they should never have accused him of. When the Lord makes reference to "My wrath..." it is clear that the Lord was angry with them because they did not accept the silence of God in the life of Job. The Lord did not reveal to anyone the purpose for all of the difficulties and trials that Job had to deal with.

It is very clear to us today exactly what was going on in the life of Job, although it was unknown to Job during his lifetime (1:1 - 2:10). The purpose was for Job to prove to Satan that he did not fear God simply because he was blessed (1:8-12). It was a controversy between the Lord and Satan, unknown to Job.

The blessing and encouragement for us today is that Job passed the test. Would we have?

One basic reason why we need to be faithful and obedient unto the Lord during the times of God's silence is that we may never fully understand His silence in this life. The Lord may not reveal the purpose of His silence. However, that never means that we are to be unfaithful or disobedient.

Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 16:1-5; 18:1-15; 21:1-5)

Both Abraham and Sarah had a difficult time accepting the silence of God. They did things they should never have done. The lessons for us today are apparent: First, Abraham did not take the spiritual leadership in his home. Second, Abraham sinned when he listened to his wife instead of trusting the Lord. Third, Abraham and Sarah believed in the Lord but they had a hard time waiting on the Lord (Psalm 27:14; 37:7; 9, 34; 40:1-3). Fourth, their failure to wait on the Lord during the silent times led to a lot of trouble in the present and in the future (Genesis 37:28). Fifth, the flesh got results: wrong results. Sixth, we love to help the Lord, especially during the silent times. Seventh, doing things in the flesh and not waiting on God during the silent times never results in God's blessings.

Are we like Abraham and Sarah? Many times, too much like them! Sometimes we do stupid and foolish things because we, like Abraham and Sarah, do not accept the silence of God. It is not easy to wait on the Lord. Many times His timing is not our timing.

Areas in Which It Is Hard to Accept God's Silence

Finances

Many do not have a clue as to what the Bible teaches about biblical giving and finances.

Blatantly unbiblical, fleshly, and worldly agendas are common, ordinary, and accepted as the widespread norm in financial matters. Legion are the ministries, Christian organizations, and Christian leaders that are of the Abraham and Sarah mentality in financial matters: Use the flesh and human wisdom to get results.

Evangelism

Compromise is accepted and common because we do not and will not accept the silence of God. Easy-believism, human manipulation, worldly methods, and questionable statistics are widespread. In the area of evangelism, the Bible teaches faithfulness, not human ingenuity; fruit, not fleshly results.

Marriage

Not accepting the silence of God in this area has obviously led to a lot of trouble, to say the least! Many, if not most believers, have known some, if not many, who simply did not wait on the Lord. The aftermath was tragic and disastrous. The spirit of Samson is not dead!

Trials

We always need to be encouraged to accept God's silence during trials, testing, and adversity (James 1:2-4; 5:10-11). This is always a strategic, key, and critical time in the life of a believer.

It Was Not Easy for Spurgeon (his most memorable crisis)

Charles Haddon Spurgeon accepted the pastorate of the New Park Street Baptist Chapel located in London, England in April of 1854. He was married to Susannah Thompson on January 8, 1856. During the time the Metropolitan Tabernacle was being built (1856-1861), the church met in the Surrey Gardens Music Hall.

The Tragedy

The first Sunday at the Music Hall took place on October 19, 1856. At least ten thousand eager worshippers were present with many thousands outside unable to get in. According to historical records, it was the largest crowd ever assembled under one roof to hear a nonconformist preacher.

The service began with a few words of greeting, then a prayer, followed by a hymn. Then Spurgeon read the scripture and they sang another hymn in preparation for the message from Spurgeon. After his prayer prior to the message, it happened: Someone yelled out: "Fire! Fire! The galleries are giving away! The place is falling!" Pandemonium broke loose. Panic ensued.

The result: Seven people were trampled to death; twenty-eight had to be taken to the local hospital seriously injured.

“What had actually happened that fateful Sunday at Surrey Gardens? Who were the perpetrators of the awful crime? Several explanations were forthcoming. Some said thieves had hoped to create enough confusion to play their pickpocket game. Spurgeon himself had cried out when the panic started, ‘Take care of your pockets.’ Many were robbed, but no one arrested. So many clothes littered the floor of the hall after the panic that the nearby Lock’s Field police station had insufficient storage room. Others suggested that Spurgeon’s enemies precipitated the pandemonium hoping to destroy his reputation and success. Police superintendent Lund was convinced that this constituted the real reason. He had witnessed the entire event and argued that thieves were not the perpetrators of the crime. Still, some took advantage of the circumstances. Perhaps it could be attributed to mere devilment. Nonetheless, whoever did it, the scene was well orchestrated. But it utterly failed, whatever the purpose. Concerning those who died, an inquest handed down the verdict of accidental death. The deacons of the church offered a fifty pound reward to anyone who could lead to the discovery of those who instigated the crime, but to no avail” (Drummond: *Spurgeon Prince of Preachers*, p. 246).

Spurgeon’s Obvious Discouragement

The following is a report by Mr. Moore, one of the deacons. “With reference to the origin of the alarm, there is no doubt it originated from wicked designing men. Oh, that dreadful scene! You are anxious to hear about our poor pastor. He is very bad. Very bad I say, not from any

injuries or bruises he has received, but from the extreme tension on his nerves, and his great anxiety. So bad is he that we were fearful for his mind this morning. Under these circumstances, only one thing could be done – that is, to send him into the country away from the scene. As we knew that a great number of persons would call at his house during the day, we sent him early this morning, so that none of his engagements can be entered into this week. From information I have just received, I am enabled to tell you that tonight he is a little better, but still very prostrate. Mr. Olney (another deacon) is still in bed. Let us be more merciful to our enemies of last night than they were to us. That wicked wretch – that man whom we are justified in calling a miscreant (depraved, villainous) who first gave the dreadful signal by which so much life was lost – let us even pray for him. Who knows but that he may one day stand in this room and own his great crime and seek repentance?” (*The British Banner*, October 21, 1856).

Spurgeon’s Victory

A few Sundays later, on November 23, 1856, Spurgeon went back to the same place and preached with great liberty and power. Spurgeon knew what it was to be faithful during the time of God’s silence in his life and in the life of the church he so faithfully served.

The tragedy, however, did have its effect on Spurgeon. Something that he never did overcome. He referred to this time as the most memorable crisis of his life. Up to that time, he enjoyed reasonably good health. However, after 1856, illness plagued him regularly.

For the next 35 years he faithfully preached the Word of God. He is known even today as the Prince of Preachers.

During the silence of God in his life, he did not give up; he did not quit; he did not give in. He was steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. He knew his labor for the Lord was not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58).

The lesson for all of us is obvious.

THE TIMES OF GOD'S SILENCE CAN BE TIMES TO HONOR THE LORD

Job

Obviously, Job brought great glory to the Lord during the silence of God in his life. “Though he slay me, yet will I trust him...” (Job 13:15). Job is mentioned along with Noah and Daniel in Ezekiel 14:12-14. He is once again mentioned in Ezekiel 14:20. He is mentioned again in James 5:11 in an exemplary way.

The book of Job reveals that Job's suffering was not because he was a backslider or out of the will of God. On the contrary, it was because, “There is none like him in the earth, a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil....” The purpose of his suffering was to answer the blasphemous accusations of Satan and prove that a man can honor the Lord even though he may lose everything.

Hebrews 11:36-38

In considering this subject, Hebrews 11:36-38 is an indispensable passage. The phrase “and others...” is the key to this particular passage. These specific people under consideration lived their entire lives under the silence of God. Some in the Bible lived under the temporary silence of God. The silence of God in their lives may have been brief, short-lived, and limited. Not so with those mentioned in Hebrews 11:36-38. There was no deliverance! These people lived their entire lives under the silence of God.

The passage is clear. They endured mocking, scourging, bonds, imprisonment, stoning, being sawn asunder, tempted, slain with the sword, having to wander about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitution, afflicted, and tormented. Where was God when they were stoned or when they were sawn asunder? Once again, the silence of God.

They experienced poverty, privation, persecution, and even death because they were obedient and faithful. What does the Word say about them? It describes them as “Of whom the world was not worthy...” (Hebrews 11:38). A.T. Robertson: “Graphic clause, a phrase to stir the blood of the reader” (*Word Pictures*). This is one of the highest commendations of anyone in all the Scriptures. What a phrase! “Of whom the world was not worthy.” Obviously, they brought glory, and possibly ultimate glory, to God. They were giants of the faith.

This was all done by unnamed believers before the cross. They were Old Testament believers who did not have the full revelation that we have today. Where were the signs, wonders, and miracles in their lives? Where were they when they were sawn asunder? They were absent and non-existent. As we clearly see in Fox’s *Book of Martyrs*, some, if not many, have not lived in the sunshine but in the shadows. Many did not escape.

William Carey (1761 – 1834) God’s Faithful Plodder

The extraordinary ministry of the humble clobber, William Carey, began in 1785 in the small village (p. 300) of Moulton, England. That is where he first got the burden for world evangelism and evangelism specifically in India. From there he spread the unpopular message, at that time, of world evangelism. In Nottingham on May 30, 1792, he preached the famous sermon based on Isaiah 54:2-3. “Expect great things from God...Attempt great things (world evangelism) for God.” Soon after, on October 2, 1792, the Baptist Missionary Society was founded in Kettering at the Fuller Baptist Church with 14 Baptist ministers. The historic first offering for world evangelization received at that meeting amounted to thirteen pounds and two and six pence, about \$60 in today’s money.

Seeking counsel about his vision for world evangelism from John Newton, the author of “Amazing Grace,” he was told, “If God is in it, no power on earth can hinder you.” Carey, along with his family, arrived in India in 1793. There he experienced the silence of God for several years. He found it most difficult to provide his family the basic necessities of life. Sometimes they had little or no food and lived on the charity of others. They were often plagued with native maladies. Many times he did not know what to do except pray. His wife was often bewildered. For a time they lived in an area where twenty people were killed by tigers. In 1794, his five-year-old son died. In 1799, his wife went insane and died eight years later.

Carey labored for seven years before he saw the first convert. He always considered himself a plodder and a planter, not a harvester. That first convert was severely persecuted by his friends. A subsequent convert was murdered because he worshipped Carey's English God.

Carey was constantly harassed by the British officials who were against Gospel ministry among the people of India. A devastating fire destroyed years of laborious and arduous translating work. He had to begin anew the fatiguing and difficult work of translating.

The hounds of hell pursued him. At times, he wondered where God was in all of this. He experienced the silence of God. However, he simply refused to quit. He never gave up. He remained faithful and obedient. He stayed in India for forty years, never returning to England. He translated all or part of the Word of God into 34 languages of India.

Two hundred years later, India issued a postage stamp in honor of William Carey. He is known as the father of modern missions. A tribute to him is found in Westminster Abbey in a pulpit, with the inscription, "Expect great things from God...Attempt great things for God." He faithfully served his Lord and Savior in India for forty years. On June 9th, 1834, in Serampore, India, he was promoted to glory and the shadows were turned into sunshine. The silence was over!

Five Faithful Missionaries

“Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life” (Revelation 2:10). Jim Elliot, Peter Fleming, Ed McCully, Nate Saint, Roger Youderian: Sunday, January 8th, 1956, Curaray River, deep in Ecuador’s rain forest, waiting for the arrival of the Auca (Naked Savage) Indians. They sang together as they had so often done:

“We rest on Thee, our Shield and Defender
We go not forth alone against the foe
Strong in Thy Strength, safe in Thy keeping tender
We rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go

“Yea, in thy name, O Captain of Salvation
In Thy blest name, all other names above
Jesus our Righteousness, our sure Foundation
Our Prince of Glory and our King of Love

“We go in faith, our own great weakness feeling
And needing more each day Thy grace to know
Yet from our hearts a song of triumph pealing
We rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go

“We rest on Thee, our Shield and our Defender
Thine is the battle, Thine shall be the praise
When passing through the gates of pearly splendor
Victors, we rest with Thee through endless days”

They committed themselves and all of their carefully laid plans unto the Lord. They waited to make contact with the Aucas with the purpose of winning them to Christ. Previously, friendly but limited contact had been made. Before four-thirty that same afternoon, the quiet waters of the Curaray River flowed over their five dead bodies; slain by the men they had come to win to Christ.

The story is familiar to some. One of these men, Jim Elliot, while still in college wrote these challenging words, “He is no fool, who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose.” On that Sunday in 1956, the Auca Indians, for whom Jim and the other missionaries had prayed for six years, killed him and his four missionary companions. They were faithful unto death. In subsequent days, as time passed, several of the Aucas did come to Christ. However, these five missionaries did not live to see it.

Philippians 1:26 “For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.”

Revelation 2:13 “Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.”

**DO NOT BASE YOUR CHRISTIAN LIFE ON CARNAL, WORLDLY,
AND FLESHLY PHILOSOPHIES**

We all long for utopia. Right now, down here, immediately! We want and seek earthly, physical, material blessings. However, the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ does not promise these things. We are abundantly blessed, right now, down here, with all spiritual blessings in Christ (Ephesians 1:3).

Revelation 2 & 3

The members of the local church at Smyrna did not live in the sunshine, but in the shadows. They did not enjoy earthly, material, physical, or financial blessings! This very poor local church was spiritually rich (Revelation 2:9), according to the Lord Jesus. The rich church, Laodicea (3:14-22), was the spiritually poor church (3:17) from the perspective of the Lord Jesus as he evaluated the churches. How different from our fleshly evaluation of churches today, and what we commonly and normally consider God's blessing.

If the believers in the local church at Smyrna based their Christian lives on external blessings, they obviously would have been very confused and bewildered. Discouragement could have easily set in and they could have easily become dispirited. "I know thy works, and tribulation

and poverty (but thou art rich)” (2:9). The word for poverty means abject poverty; not just poor, but very poor. Yet, at the same time, some of them were headed for martyrdom (2:10). In the midst of it all, they were steadfast and unmovable; spiritually rich (2:9). They did not base their Christian lives on carnal, worldly, or fleshly philosophies. They certainly did not base their Christian lives on financial prosperity. Neither should we!

The Churches of Macedonia

The churches of Macedonia were also very poor, in “deep poverty” (2 Corinthians 8:2), yet they were very spiritual! In fact, according to the 2 Corinthians 8 passage, they put many churches to shame. Especially the church at Corinth.

Obviously and clearly, doing God’s will frequently does not lead to external blessings.

Sometimes we forget such Bible verses as Isaiah 53:3: “despised...rejected...a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief...”; John 15:20: “if they persecuted me, they will also persecute you...”; John 16:33: “In the world ye shall have tribulation...”; 2 Corinthians 11:27: “in weariness and painfulness, in watching often, in hunger and thirst,...in cold and nakedness.”

Did the steadfast and obedient apostle Paul base his life and ministry on external and material blessings, or financial prosperity? Clearly and certainly not! Never! He experienced these things, and many more difficulties could be mentioned. He did not escape them or avoid them.

External blessings are not an indication of the blessing of God on one’s life or ministry, as clearly seen in the life of Paul. Please read and study 2 Corinthians 11:23-33. Paul did not base his Christian life on carnal, worldly, or fleshly philosophies.

Deuteronomy 29:29

“The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law” (Deuteronomy 29:29). Obedience in the midst of the silence of God. The responsibility and duty of God’s children is to “do all the words of this law.” Steadfastness in the midst of God’s silence.

SIGNS AND WONDERS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew 10 Commission: Commonly Misunderstood

Included in this commission are the following: heal the sick, raise the dead, cast out devils, and cleanse the lepers. Also, according to this commission, we are instructed: “Go not into the way of the Gentile, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 10:5-6). Also according to Matthew 10:9: “Provide neither gold nor silver, nor brass in your purses.” Surely and certainly this is not our commission today. We are not commissioned to raise the dead or to go only to the Jews (10:5-9). Obviously, our commission today is found in Matthew 28:19-20, given after the resurrection.

Matthew 28:19-20 Commission

This is our commission for today given by the Lord Jesus to His followers after His resurrection. One command, “Teach (make disciples) all nations” (Matthew 28:19).

Obviously, we are not to go only to the Jews according to the Matthew 10 Commission. Here in Matthew 28:19-20, we have one command, “teach” (make disciples), and three participles:

- (1) Going,
- (2) Baptizing,
- (3) Teaching.

This is the commission for us today:

- (1) Evangelize (make disciples),
- (2) Baptize them (the converts) in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
- (3) Establish them in the teaching ministry of the local New Testament Church for their edification.

Although this very pattern was clearly followed in the book of Acts, many today do not obey this clear and obvious commission, many times referred to as the “Great Commission,” because they eliminate baptism and the local church.

Mark 16:17-18

Jesus here describes certain signs that would accompany those who believed the Gospel message. It should be noted: We are not commanded to do these things.

The question is: Do these signs exist today or were they possibly temporary signs?

- (1) Demons cast out (Acts 8:7; 16:18; 19:11-16).

(2) Tongues (Acts 2:4-11; 10:46; 19:6).

In Acts 2, the tongues were clearly languages, not ecstatic utterances or some type of private language that no one could understand. As we study the three passages in the book of Acts where tongues are specifically mentioned, Jewish people are always prominent, either directly or indirectly. (1 Corinthians 14:21-22 says that tongues are a sign to unbelieving Jews, not Gentiles.)

Each time in the book of Acts where tongues are mentioned, the Gospel was carried to a new ethnic group for the first time by a Jew. The record of many other conversions in the book of Acts is not accompanied by tongues.

It is most important to note that on no occasion in the book of Acts (even among those who did speak in tongues!) did anyone seek or was anyone seeking to speak in tongues. The only Epistle in which there is any teaching about tongues is 1 Corinthians. In this Epistle, tongues are definitely not a sign of spirituality (3:3; 12-14). In fact, the believers are restricted and discouraged from speaking in tongues (14:6, 19, 23).

(3) Serpents (Mark 16:18).

This is a promise of divine protection (take up serpents and drink any deadly thing) that refers to occasions when persecutors would force believers to do these things. Clearly this passage does not warrant or endorse voluntary snake handling or drinking poison. These types of practices were never sanctioned or practiced in the Book of Acts or the early church.

Paul's encounter with a snake at Malta was unintentional (Acts 28:3-5). Clearly this passage, which is the only reference to serpents in the Book of Acts or in the Epistles, does not in any way encourage any type of sensational snake handling (obviously!).

(4) Drink poison without harmful effects. Not mentioned in the Book of Acts.

(5) Lay hands on the sick for healing (Acts 3:7; 19:10; 28:8-9).

In the Book of Acts, the apostles healed with a word or a touch (sometimes even with their shadow?) (Acts 5:12-16; 9:32-35; 28:8), instantly (3:7-8), totally, and completely (9:34), anyone and everyone (5:12-16; 28:9), serious medical and physical problems (totally impossible from the human standpoint! “lame from his mother’s womb” type!) (Acts 3:1-4). In fact, they actually raised the dead (9:36-42; 20:9-12)!

Acts 3 healing is not being repeated today: Acts 3:1, 2 records a supernatural healing that took place in public view of thousands of unsaved people (4:16). No healing line or healing service! First, this man who was supernaturally healed was unsaved and did not ask to be healed (3:3-6). He did not have faith (3:3)! This unsaved man asked for alms, not healing. Second, he gave clear, obvious, and undisputable evidence before thousands (4:16) that he was supernaturally healed (walked, leaped 3:8, 9). This supernatural healing was not done in private or secret nor was it kept secret. Third, “all the people saw him walking and praising God...” (3:9). Fourth, we must not forget he was “lame from his mother’s womb” (3:2). This was truly a supernatural healing.

These were undeniably miraculous and supernatural healings, without question! As we compare them with modern day “faith healers” and “healing campaigns,” we find that there is no comparison. Acts 5:12-16 says they healed everyone. This is never true of so-called modern

day faith healers. Many with serious medical problems never get into the healing line, much less on the platform. Modern day faith healers do not compare. Nor are they on par with New Testament supernatural healings. To think they are is to be delusional and to live in a world of delusion. Exaggeration and falsification of their own making is widespread and common. Fantasy land is not only located in Orlando, but in many churches and on many television broadcasts!

It is significant to note that the Mark 16:17-18 passage does not say, “Until the end of the world” as the Matthew 28:19-20 passage clearly states in reference to the Great Commission.

Philippians 2:25-27, why didn't Paul heal Epaphroditus? 2 Timothy 4:20, why didn't Paul heal Trophimus? 1 Timothy 5:23, why didn't Paul heal Timothy?

It seems that the miraculous sign gift of healing was used for a unique purpose as found in Hebrews 2:3-4. According to this passage, the signs, wonders, and miracles were done to confirm, authenticate, and validate the New Testament Gospel message; they were never intended as a permanent way to keep the church in perfect health. New Testament church services did not center around healing services. The Word was always prominent (Hebrews 13:7; 1 Peter 5:1-2; 2 Timothy 3:15; 4:3).

The Epistles

The last recorded miracle is found in Acts 28:1-10. The only mention of the gift of healing in all the Epistles is found in 1 Corinthians 12:28, 30. In two later Epistles: Ephesians 4:11, 12 and Romans 12:6-8, when the gifts are specifically mentioned, there is absolutely no mention of the gift of healing or any other sign gift (tongues, etc.). In fact, there is no acknowledgement or citing of any specific miraculous healing in any of the Epistles. Nowhere in the Epistles are healing services encouraged. As much as some might want to find it, it simply is not there anywhere in the Epistles! In fact, some of the most godly people in the churches had ongoing chronic illnesses and were not in the best of health (1 Timothy 5:23; 3 John 2 – Timothy and Gaius).

Does anyone have the New Testament gift of healing today as practiced in the Book of Acts? Extensive investigation, practical experience, common sense, and the clear teaching of the Word would say no!

Are New Testament signs, wonders, and miracles being repeated today? The answer is NO! No one is raising the dead as Peter did in Acts 9:36-42! The phenomena of Acts 2: the wind (2:2), the cloven tongues (2:3), the sound (2:2), are not being repeated today anywhere. New Testament, “They were healed every one” (Acts 5:16) type healing is not going on today.

In Colossians 4:14, we read about Luke, “the beloved physician.” Not Luke the beloved faith healer!

2 Corinthians 12:12

“Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.” According to Acts 18:1-18, the church at Corinth was founded by Paul. It is interesting to note that not one sign, wonder, or mighty deed is mentioned in the Acts 18 passage. Nor are any of them mentioned in the books of First or Second Corinthians specifically. Certainly, this would cause us to wonder, “Why they are not mentioned?” In fact, the signs, wonders, and miracles of an apostle are only referred to three times in all of the Epistles: Romans 15:19; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:3-4. They are not mentioned as often as we might think. In these passages, we are never encouraged in any way to seek after these signs, wonders, and miracles.

I think we can safely say that believers today are not to base their faith on signs, wonders, and miracles.

James 5:14-16

Here we learn about the church’s procedure regarding the healing of those who had unconfessed sin in their lives.

1 Corinthians 11:28-31

Here we learn about sickness that was the direct result of sin in the believer’s life.

Philippians 2:25-30

In this passage we have the healing of a very godly man, Epaphroditus, who was “sick nigh unto death.” The passage says he was healed by the mercy of God, not as the result of someone who possessed the gift of healing.

Obviously the Lord can heal even today in accordance with his will. (Philippians 2:27; James 5:15; 1 John 5:14).

2 Thessalonians 2:9 (Not All Miracles Are of God; They May Be from the Devil to Deceive and Mislead!)

Seeing is not always believing (a mirage looks like water but is not!). Satan can do supernatural things (miracles), he does have the power to perform miracles. He can empower his followers to do the supernatural! (Matthew 24:24; Mark 5:4; 13:22; Luke 4:5; 2 Thessalonians 2:9). How do we discern? Only on the basis of the Word. The Bible is our authority. Our authority is not experiential; just because we feel it, speak it (tongues!), etc., does not mean it is from God!

GOD’S SILENCE AND GOD’S JUDGMENT

“I saw the prosperity of the wicked” (Psalm 73:3); “These are the ungodly who prosper in the world; they increase in riches” (73:12). Many other verses could be cited. “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil” (Ecclesiastes 8:11). God’s judgment is not always “executed speedily.”

However, God’s judgment is unavoidable and certain! “For God shall bring every work into judgment with every secret thing...” (12:14). Just because He does not judge immediately, does not mean He will not judge! Surely, assuredly, and unmistakably according to the Word of God, He will. God’s silence is not God’s dismissal!

Revelation 6:9-11

The timing of God’s judgment is in the hands of a sovereign God. His timing is usually not our timing. Certainly, His timing was not the timing of those who we read about in Revelation 6:9-11. They expressed a desire for immediate judgment. God would judge, but not immediately.

God's judgment is certain according to Acts 17:31 "He hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained: whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."

"In the day when God shall judge..." (Romans 2:16). "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened..." (Revelation 20:12). God's judgment is not only certain, but also future. "But I say unto you that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment" (Matthew 12:36). God's judgment is not only certain and future, but also, personal and individual.

"It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27).

Peter summarizes it quite clearly in 2 Peter 2:9: "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished."

Don't be misled and deceived by thinking that God's silence is God's dismissal!

THE FATHER’S SILENCE AT CALVARY

“Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?’ That is to say ‘My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ ” (Matthew 27:45-46).

Here we learn a great spiritual truth: a great lesson to take to heart. The Father’s silence does not mean that He is not at work. It certainly does not mean He is apathetic. During that time at Calvary, the greatest work in all the world was accomplished: the work of man’s redemption, man’s salvation. The Father was propitiated (1 John 2:2).

The blood of Christ satisfied the righteousness demands of the Father in regards to the sin problem. Because of Christ’s death we now can have salvation through repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. “Testifying both to the Jews and to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21).

Old Testament Prophecies

The Old Testament prophecies were clear concerning the Messiah, the Savior of the world.

“Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin.... He shall see the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied” (Isaiah 53:10-11).

Clear New Testament Teaching about the Cross

“For He (the Father) hath made Him (the Son) to be sin for us, who (Jesus) knew no sin: that we might be made for the righteousness of God in Him” (1 Corinthians 5:21).

“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

“Having made peace through the blood of his cross...” (Colossians 1:20).

“For this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:28).

“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers: But with the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world...” (1 Peter 1:18-20).

BELIEVERS SHOULD NOT BE SILENT!

2 Kings 6:24-28, 7:1-9

During the days of Elisha in the city of Samaria, we learn about a deadly famine (2 Kings 6:24, 25, 28), a time of famine, starvation, and death.

First, a great famine in the city of Samaria: “And it came to pass after this that Benhadad King of Syria gathered his host, and went up, and besieged Samaria...” (6:24-25).

Second, we learn about the four lepers: “And there were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate: and they said one to another, ‘Why sit we here until we die? If we say we will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die.’ And they rose up in the twilight to go unto the camp of the Syrians: and when they were come to the uttermost part of the camp of Syria, behold there was no man there” (7:3-5).

Third, the enemy, the Syrians, fled (7:6-8). They fled leaving their abundant provisions of food among other things. “For the Lord had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host.... Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even the camp as it was, and fled for their life” (7:6-7).

Fourth, the four lepers were used to save the Israelites from starvation and death. They did not hold their silence when they discovered the abundant provisions the fleeing Syrians left behind in their haste (7:9).

The lessons for believers are unmistakable:

First, the lepers were urgent in telling the good news (7:9) about the abundant provisions they discovered. Enough food to bring an end to the famine, starvation, and death in the camp of Israel. “Then they said one to another, we do not well: this is a day of good tidings and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the King’s household” (7:9).

We today must be urgent in telling the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the words of the risen Lord: “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15).

Second, we, like the lepers, need to be vocal. “That we may go and tell...” (2 Kings 7:9).

We must be vocal in the work of personal evangelism. Silence is sin. “That utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that I may speak boldly as I ought to speak” (Ephesians 6:19, 20).

Third, we must be united as the lepers were. “We may go” (2 Kings 7:9). They were united. Everyone, not just some, has the responsibility to spread the Gospel.

“For from you sounded out the word of the Lord...” (1 Thessalonians 1:8).

The entire assembly; they did it as a unit. It is the duty of every one of God’s children to sound out the word of the Lord to the unsaved.

The lesson from the four lepers is clear: Silence is shameful and sinful. Believers should not be silent.

The Widow Woman

Years ago, Dr. R.A. Torrey, the well-known evangelist, was preaching about the need for every person in Christ to reach those who are out of Christ. That night, after preaching about the responsibility of every believer to be an active witness for Christ, a woman came to Dr. Torrey and said rather excitedly, “Dr. Torrey, you are wrong; you are dead wrong! Until tonight you were my favorite preacher, but no more!” Dr. Torrey sought to calm the woman down. He said, “Why are you so upset over the message this evening?” She answered: “You said every

Christian ought to be an active witness for Christ. I thoroughly disagree with that!” Dr. Torrey asked, “Why?” This woman, who had been a Christian for several years, said, “I am a widow with three young boys. I spend all the day and part of the evening slaving behind my sewing machine, seeking to eke out a living for me and my boys. I hardly ever leave my apartment. How do you expect me to be a witness and soul winner when I have to spend most of my life behind a sewing machine? I have no time to do it.”

Dr. Torrey asked, “Did you ever witness to the milkman or iceman?” The woman bowed her head in shame. The Lord convicted her; she asked Dr. Torrey’s forgiveness for the way she acted; prayed and set out by the grace of God to be an active witness for Christ. She realized that even though she spent most of her time behind a sewing machine, she could still be a witness for Christ.

The next day, her iceman, George, came to the door bright and early. She had on her best dress, the best tablecloth on the table, and a large open Bible on the table with a bouquet of beautiful flowers. (She did all that so George would ask some questions so she could talk to him about the Lord.) As George was leaving, he said, “I’ve never seen that open Bible before and the place looks so nice.”

The woman said nothing as George left. She realized that she had failed to witness to George as she had planned to do. She ran to the door and called, “George! George!” He came back to the apartment. She said, “Sit down, please, George. I have known you for many years and you have been in this home many times delivering the ice, yet I have not once spoken to you about your

soul. George, if you died today, where would you spend eternity?” George, with tears in his eyes said, “I have just recently attended a revival meeting and although I knew I should have gone forward, I didn’t have enough courage. I was just hoping that someone would somehow take the Bible and show me how to be saved today.”

That day the widow woman had the joy of leading George to Jesus.

Ezekiel 3:18

Ezekiel’s words are challenging: “When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die, and thou givest Him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.”

Luke 24:47

“And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations...” (Luke 24:47). The words of our risen Lord!

**AT TIMES DURING OUR PILGRIM JOURNEY, WE ALL EXPERIENCE
THE SILENCE OF GOD. GOD'S SILENCE IN OUR LIVES NEVER
MEANS THAT HE HAS FORSAKEN US; NOR DOES IT MEAN WE
SHOULD FORSAKE HIM.**