

MARANATHA BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

18 November 2018

"Present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Colossians 1:28)

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Sunday School: 10 am

Sunday English / Chinese Worship Service: 10.45 am Sunday Chinese Worship Service: 7.30 pm

Wednesday Prayer Meeting: 8.00 pm

Rev Colin Wong (HP : 9665 8160); Elder Daniel Tau (HP : 9761 5415); Elder Peter Ong (HP : 9626 7045)

WHEN GOD IS SILENT

Have you ever felt like God was giving you a deaf ear to your prayers? You prayed and waited on Him, but there was complete silent from Him. And you wondered whether He ever heard you or lost interest in you. The feeling is unbearable.

A Christian confesses, "I've been going through a deep valley for some time now. God seems so distant, prayer seems to bounce off the ceiling, and there is no more motivation to read the Word and pray. My spiritual aspiration has come to a dead end."

Can this "Dark Night of the Soul" last for a long period of time? Is there anything wrong with me? No. This is a common phenomenon of the Christian life.

The phrase "The Dark Night of the Soul" was coined by St John of the Cross, a 16th Century Roman Catholic monk. The term expresses something many ordinary Christians experience, a feeling that prayer and Scripture have ceased to resonate and the spiritual life has become lifeless and purposeless.

So, what should we do when God is silent? Should we call a friend and ask for help? Should we do something or anything to find relief of such unbearable feeling? How would we deal with our low ebb of spirituality?

How to Respond to God's Silence

First, do not be discouraged. When God is silent, He has a purpose. God's silence is part of His training program for His children. One of the lessons you and I need to learn is to wait on God. We can't hurry Him because His time is not our time. He makes everything beautiful in its time (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

When Jesus' brothers urged Him to go to Jerusalem to show off His power to the world, He said to them, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always here" (John 7:6, 8). And even His death is scheduled from eternity. John tells us that the people sought to kill Him in Jerusalem, but no one laid a hand on Him because His time had not yet come (John 7:30).

What a needed lesson for all of us! James Hudson Taylor rightly said, "It is not lost time to wait

on God.” Waiting on God is not a waste of time though waiting on God is a trying time. Therefore, let us not be disheartened when God seems to be silent despite our persistent call on Him.

Second, take the opportunity to examine ourselves (2 Corinthians 13:5). One of the reasons why God is silent is because of sin in our lives. God hates sin. He is pure and holy. He cannot come into contact with sin (Habakkuk 1:13). The Psalmist says, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me” (Psalm 66:18; Isaiah 59:1, 2). Therefore, you and I need to ask the Holy Spirit of God to search us thoroughly to make sure every sin is confessed and cleansed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ (Psalm 139:23, 24; 1 John 1:9). May I encourage you to get right with God now! Do not procrastinate!

Third, take time to reflect on our relationship with God and men. Christianity is more than a religion. It is a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ (John 14:6; 1 Timothy 2:5). Jesus came to the wicked world to die for sinners so that they may be reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:18-21). Jesus had come to restore that broken relationship and fellowship which Adam and Eve enjoyed while they were in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:16, 17; 3).

Have we been deepening our relationship with God since conversion? Have we been walking with God? Have we been enjoying His presence daily? Where is that joy of salvation?

We not only need to reflect on our relationship with God, but also on our relationship with others. There is only one way to know whether our relationship with other fellow Christians is good and pleasing to God. The way has to do with our personal relationship with God. The logic is simple. If our personal relationship with God is bad, then we cannot say that our relationship with fellow Christians is good. Jesus says, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:37-40).

We are commanded to love God first and then love men. Our vertical relationship with God determines our horizontal relationship with men. Therefore, when God seems to be silent, we should not complain to Him or men but we should take time to reflect on our personal relationship with God and men. Such an exercise will do us good spiritually.

Fourth, read our Bible faithfully. When God is silent, what is He saying to us? I am not saying that God cannot speak to us through other means. He can speak to us by means of people, good and bad circumstances or events. But oftentimes God speaks to us through His Word. The Word reveals God’s wonderful will for our lives. Therefore, let us make every effort to read the Word prayerfully.

Fifth, continue to pray persistently. When God is silent, we must not stop talking to Him. Our God is a prayer-answering God. He hears every prayer and He answers every one of them. But it must be according to His will, purpose and time. Therefore, we must keep calling on Him because He is just a prayer away.

Sixth, accept the sovereignty of God. Despite all adverse circumstances, God is still on the throne. He is still in control of every circumstance and situation. We may not understand everything about His sovereignty but this is a clear teaching of the Holy Scripture (Psalm 115:3; Exodus 9:29; 1 Chronicles 29:11, 12). Therefore, let us learn to submit ourselves willingly to

God who is our faithful Creator (1 Peter 4:19).

Seventh, live life as per normal. No matter what the situation is, we should live a normal life and carry out our daily Christian duties faithfully. Do not try to outsmart God. Let Him lead and guide us (Psalm 32:8), and wait on Him patiently (Psalm 40:1-4).

Finally, have faith in God (Matthew 13:58; Mark 11:22). Hebrews tells us that without faith, it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). Faith in God is dynamic, not static. Faith grows daily. There are occasions of faith. Therefore, let us seize every opportunity to exercise our faith and grow in it (James 1:2-8; 1 Peter 1:6, 7).

How should we respond to God's silence? What should we do? When God is silent, He always has a reason. Therefore, our part is not to give up but to wait on Him. While waiting on Him, there are a number of things we can do, and I have given you some of them. Let me close with this poem.

I BELIEVE

I believe in the sun
even when it isn't shining.
I believe in love
even when I am alone.
I believe in God
even when He is silent.

May God grant us such an attitude when He seems to be silent in the time of crises! Amen.

Pastor Colin Wong

Theme for the Quarter :

LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IN THE WORLD (The Study of the Epistle of James)

English Worship Service :

Rev Colin Wong
speaks on

The Folly of Planning without God

(Scripture Text : James 4:11-17; Responsive Reading : 1 Samuel 23:1-14)

[End of MM]