

WHEN GOD IS SILENT

(Luke 1:5-17)

The silence of God puzzles the people of God throughout history (Psalm 22:1-2; 42:9-10). David once uttered this desperate prayer: “How long, O Lord, will You forget me forever?” How long will You hide Your face from me?” (Psalm 13:1). The prophet Habakkuk cried out to God, “How long, O Lord, must I call for help, but You do not listen? Why are You silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves?” (Hab. 1:2,13). We all wrestle with the silence of God which often confronts us in the form of unanswered prayers. As we reflect on the lives of Zechariah and Elizabeth who also dealt with the problem of God’s silence, let these two divine assurances provide us with instruction and encouragement.

1. _____ can never hinder God’s plan for our lives.

Zechariah and Elizabeth were both godly, righteous and faithful servants of God (Luke 1:5-6). But being righteous and faithful to God does not mean a struggle-free life. Zechariah and Elizabeth suffered the following difficulties and crises: the 400 years of God’s prophetic silence, the evil and violent rule of king Herod, and the sorrow of childlessness (Mal. 4:5-6; Matt. 2:16; Luke 1:5-7). In spite of all these trials, Zechariah never stopped serving the Lord as a priest. And God graciously honored his faithful service in marvelous ways. First, Zechariah was granted the once-in-a-lifetime privilege of going into the Temple’s Holy Place before the presence of God and burning the incense during the sacrifice (Luke 1:8-9). This was the highest point in his entire ministry as a Jewish priest. Second, Zechariah was chosen by God to be the first recipient of angelic revelation when God broke His prophetic silence after 400 years (Luke 1:10-11). The seasons of God’s silence are moments of God’s preparation of His people. No matter how fierce and heart-breaking our life’s struggles are, no one can ever hinder God from fulfilling and executing His glorious plans for His chosen ones (Jer. 29:11; Psalm 33:11).

2. _____ far outweighs our life’s disappointments.

God is the God of wonders and the God of surprising grace. He manifested His surprising grace to Zechariah and Elizabeth when they least expected it. The angel Gabriel appeared to Zechariah in the temple to deliver him the good news that God has finally answered their prayer for a son (Luke 1:11-13). God’s gift of a child to them was essentially the fulfillment of God’s promise to Israel concerning the forerunner of the Messiah (Mal. 4:5-6; Luke 1:14-17). Their son, John the Baptist, would be the chosen prophet of God who would prepare the way of the Messiah and announced the coming of Jesus, the Lamb of God, who would take away the sin of the world (John 1:29). The birth of Zechariah’s son would cause rejoicing and gladness because it would usher in the greatest revival in history, the arrival of the anointed Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ. God often waits until times are dark and seemingly hopeless before He sends the sunshine of His surprising and wondrous grace (Psalm 40:4-5).
