

Yet I am not silenced

Devotional by Jesse Leland — April 19, 2020

“God has made my heart faint; the Almighty has terrified me; yet I am not silenced because of the darkness, nor because thick darkness covers my face.” — Job 23:16–17

In the Old Testament, God’s servants model examples of faith under trial (Heb. 11:32–40). For example, Job’s faith was tested to the utmost, with Satan destroying his ten children and possessions via both natural (e.g. the fire of God falling from heaven) and human evils (e.g. the Sabeen raiders), before also assaulting his physical health. Yet Job remained steadfast in his faith. What keys can we glean from his timeless example?

The first key lies in willing submission to God as being sovereign over all things — e.g., Job declared *“I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.”* (Job 42:2). So, clearly our first response to adversity (i.e. in any form) should be acceptance of God’s sovereign purpose.

The second key, is trusting that God is ultimately working good for those that love him — i.e., he is for us (Rom. 8:28, 31). The Old Testament faithful exhibit a submissive willingness to be purified *“But He [God] knows the way that I take; when he has tried me, I shall come out as gold.”* (Job 23:10), combined with an expectation of compassion *“...but, though He [God] causes grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love...”* (Lam. 3:32). In short, the knowledge that God works on behalf of his children (e.g. see Isa. 64:4) was integral to their faithfulness under trial.

Further, their understanding of God’s sovereignty, yielded the knowledge that their adversary (i.e. Satan) was also in submission to divine authority (see Job 1: 6–12) and cannot act beyond that allowed by God. We know from Scripture that our enemy is real (Eph. 6:11), cunning (Gen. 3:1–5) and seeking to devour (1 Pet. 5:8). So, a misstep here can be serious. The deceiver always tempts believers to excess — to overestimate or underestimate his power.

I think that this passage (Job 23:16–17) yields a subtle, yet important example worth remembering during challenging times. Because Job’s first two statements are true — i.e., “*God has made my heart faint...*” and “*...the Almighty has terrified me...*”, our souls can respond with “*...yet I am not silenced...*”. Because God is in control, we are not led into despair and can declare his faithfulness. Consider the opposite focus. If ‘Satan has made my heart faint’ or ‘Satan has terrified me’ — where is God in our trial? If left unchecked, I believe that such a skewed focus tends to silence faith expressions like prayer, worship, and Gospel proclamation. Conversely, a right knowledge of God, through relationship with Jesus Christ, will consistently yield movement towards outward expressions of faith (i.e. in any circumstances, albeit imperfectly).

But, how does this fit in with today’s trials?

Many in the world are now being overrun with fear and anxiety. Fear of economic hardship, fear of sickness, fear of uncertainty and fear of death. As Christians, we shouldn’t have our heads in the sand. There are concerning issues developing and many of us will probably be affected to some degree. However, and this is a colossal HOWEVER — God is still in control. Jesus Christ is seated at his right hand. All who are in Christ Jesus are eternally secure! In the light of these eternal facts, let’s echo faithful Job “*...yet I am not silenced...*”. Irrespective of the pressures around us, let’s ring our brothers and sisters, love our neighbours, share the Gospel, love our husbands and wives, minister to our children, pray for one another and give generously. Such Holy Spirit-initiated love responses (i.e. particularly in the face of adversity!) declare the sovereignty of our great God and will bring glory, honour and praise to the Lord Jesus Christ.

And, remember Paul’s closing words to the Roman church — “*The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet*” (Rom. 16:20). Blessed be the name of the LORD. Amen.