

*Listen!*

GOD  
IS SPEAKING  
TO YOU

LARGE-PRINT DEVOTIONS

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## PREFACE

How comforting and reassuring it is when our heavenly Father speaks to us in our moments of fear or sorrow! He always provides just the message we need to hear, and quickly we find ourselves facing our problem with new hope and confidence.

In this book we hope to bring you the voice of God as he speaks to you in situations that trouble you, especially as you grow older. In these pages, we can offer only a sampling of such situations and how God so wonderfully addresses them. It is our fervent hope that these pages will open your eyes to the comfort and guidance God has to offer you in all the circumstances that may at some time touch your life. It is our hope that you will know where to look for relief. It is our hope that you will discover anew how wonderfully God speaks to you in his Word, so that you seek his voice as your first resource in every need.

*Henry Paustian*

1



*Silent!*

## HE SPEAKS TO YOU EVEN WHEN HE SEEMS SILENT

*Jesus did not answer a word.*

— (Matthew 15:23) —

The world often accuses God of being silent, indifferent to the misery and suffering even of his own people. After all, he is the almighty God. Could he not with one word or with one wave of his majestic hand stamp out every form of misery? Such questions—questions we’ve perhaps asked ourselves too—are raised in a book with the title *The Silence of God*.

Even we who should know better are at times bothered by what we consider “the silence of God,” that is, the apparent lack of a response from God when we cry to him over and over for help and there appears to be no answer. Doesn’t he hear us? Doesn’t he care? The woman of Canaan may have felt that way when she desperately cried to Jesus for help, and “Jesus did not answer a word.” The psalmist expressed that same sort of desperate anguish with the words “I cry out by day, but you do not answer” (Psalm 22:2).



This very day it may seem to us too that God is silent, unwilling to speak and offer comfort for some misery of ours. But could it be that the problem is not with his not speaking but with our not hearing? Remember that in all his dealings with us, he acts in perfect wisdom and love. He always speaks what we need to hear and precisely when we need to hear it.

If for a time he is silent to our cry, his is the silence of higher thoughts and wiser purposes. Knowing him as we do, we want to react as his mother did at Cana when he gently turned aside her request with the words “My time has not yet come” (John 2:4). She wisely did not take this as a refusal. She recognized that Jesus was not turning her away. Rather, she saw in his words the promise that his hour would come, at the right time. And, of course, it did.

Through what channels does he speak to those of us who live so many years after he walked visibly among us? At times, he may use events that touch our lives to draw us closer to himself—perhaps through an accident or illness or the death of a friend. But our Lord most clearly speaks to us from the pages of his Word, that totally reliable, verbally inspired, inerrant Word of which Moses wrote, “The word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it” (Deuteronomy 30:14). That Word is ever ready to comfort and guide and strengthen us as we read it or as we meditate on Bible verses we memorized in our childhood many years ago. We will find that he is always ready to speak to us in his Word, always having precisely the words we need.

Even when our hearing has become so impaired that our family needs to shout to get through to us, we will hear our heavenly Father speaking to us, not only offering comfort but

also working that comfort in us. He not only guides us in what we should do but also gives us strength and willingness to do it. What a source of help that Word is!

The world calls the silence of God the greatest proof that he does not exist. We Christians may find it the greatest test of our faith. Although it is difficult to wait, and we usually want help now rather than at some future time, we simply need to let our faith take over and to keep listening for his voice, knowing assuredly that he will provide a special word for every situation we face. He is more anxious to speak than we are to hear. Waiting becomes easier if we remember that he is also waiting, waiting for the right time to speak to us. Confidently we can say with young Samuel, "Speak, for your servant is listening" (1 Samuel 3:10).

## *— Prayer —*

*At times, dear Lord, you seem so very silent, just when we most need to hear your voice. Help us to wait patiently for you to speak. Give us hearing ears and believing hearts, ready to accept whatever you would say to us. Amen.*



## 2

# HE SPEAKS TO YOU WHO ARE SHUT-INS

---

*I have learned to be content  
whatever the circumstances.*

— (Philippians 4:11) —

Life changes quite drastically for people when they become shut-ins. Gone are many of the pleasant experiences they once took for granted. No more travel, no more shopping, no more worship in God's house, no more anything, it seems.

In their busy years, they may have longed for just a few such quiet, inactive days away from the pressures and busy schedules of their lives. Now they would so love to take a leisurely drive, to visit a friend, to stroll through the shopping mall or even a grocery store. But all that is past. They've joined the growing army of shut-ins.

What can God say to make the burdens lighter if we are shut-ins? How can he make us into cheerful and content people? How can he keep us from becoming constant complainers, who make life miserable, not only for ourselves but for others as well? One of God's answers for such questions

is found in these words of the apostle Paul: “I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.”

Paul’s contentment must have been a mystery to many who knew him, for he was suffering more misery and enduring greater dangers than all of us put together. His travels took him down the road of persecution and hostility. He was beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, and imprisoned. Yet instead of being embittered and full of complaints, he was totally content, even to the point of rejoicing that he was counted worthy to suffer in the service of Jesus.

Paul was not that way by nature. He tells us that he had to learn such contentment. What taught him this amazing spirit? After years of total Pharisaic self-righteousness, Paul had learned to know himself as a hopeless, condemned sinner who could expect nothing but hell. But then Christ sought him out on that Damascus highway, and Paul came to know Christ and his love, that love of which Paul then spoke so simply and yet so eloquently: “[Christ] loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). That love assured Paul of the love of God from which nothing could ever separate him again.

Serving God faithfully brought Paul plenty of suffering, but he could now look at those sufferings not as angry blows from God but as tools of God, used by him to further his plans for Paul’s eternal future. And when he became *a kind of shut-in* (he was imprisoned in a Roman jail cell), even this was serving God’s purpose. It enabled Paul to witness to the elite prison guards and, through them, to many others in Rome.

This was but one of many happy surprises Paul experienced as God’s child. Paul did not enjoy his suffering any

more than we would enjoy being shut-ins, but he knew that it was necessary, for God does not permit his beloved children to suffer unnecessarily for even one moment. Nor does he allow them to experience an ounce of misery that will not serve his eternal purposes for them. So Paul was content. God was working out his purposes in Paul's life in absolute wisdom and love, and that was all Paul needed to know. His path of suffering was not an aimless detour. He could confidently exclaim with the psalmist, "You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory" (Psalm 73:24).

No, a child of God would not choose the life of a shut-in. But whatever may happen to us, we are grateful that we can confidently leave the control over our lives and the difficult decisions of life up to God and say, "Your way, not mine, O Lord." We can still pray for a return to a more normal life, for God has plenty of miracles left. If God decides to put that wheelchair aside, he will do just that. Whatever God chooses, the worst of suffering as shut-ins is not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. Then suddenly there will be no more wheelchairs for us, or pain pills, or dimmed eyes, but only perfect peace and contentment in his presence. Until then, we can be content and wait for his purposes to unfold. They are worth waiting for!

## *— Prayer —*

*We know, Lord, that whatever circumstances you choose for us, they serve your loving purpose.*

*Teach us with Paul to be content. Give us such a faith as this. Amen.*

## 3



*Speak!*

## HE SPEAKS TO YOU AS YOU ARE TROUBLED BY WEAKNESS

---

*“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

— (2 Corinthians 12:9,10) —

If ever a person had the right to boast of his strength and accomplishments, it would have to have been the apostle Paul. He accomplished more in the Lord’s service than all the other apostles combined. Yet we don’t hear a word of his boasting in his own wisdom or strength. Rather, Paul gloried in his weaknesses.

How could this be, when it must have seemed that his weaknesses would certainly hinder him in the work that was so dear to him? More than that. How could this apostle actually take pleasure in his weakness? Twice he explained:

“So that Christ’s power may rest on me” and “When I am weak, then I am strong.”

God explains to us here how the weaknesses that pile up in life, including old age, can actually become advantages and blessings to us. Paul had some kind of “thorn in the flesh,” some weakness that seemed to hinder him in his work. Three times he prayed to be delivered from it. God surely loved Paul and was even more concerned about his mission than was the apostle, yet he gently said no to Paul’s repeated request. “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” was God’s answer.

Paul understood. He writes, “I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.” The power needed to accomplish his work was not his own. It was the Lord’s. He added, “I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

Without Christ, Paul could accomplish nothing. Any wisdom or strength he had belonged to Christ. And when he learned not to trust in his own strength and ability but to rely totally on the Lord’s, then the Lord could take over and great things would happen. The blind would see, the deaf would hear, sinners would become saints, the dead would live. These wonders could happen only when Paul had emptied the cup of his own wisdom and let the Lord fill it with his. So Paul says, “When I am weak, then I am strong.”

How meaningful this is for us as the weaknesses of aging set in. We, like Paul, need to learn to trust totally in a strength and wisdom far greater than our own. We want to ask God to fill our cup with whatever we need to do his will.

Enlarging on the prayer of the disciples, we could pray: “Lord, we do believe, but help us in our unbelief and doubts. Lord, we do love you, but help us in our times of indifference. Lord, we do struggle against temptation, but give us more victories. Lord, we do try to follow you, but keep us from straying so often. Lord, we do try to obey, but keep us from frequent disobedience. We are weak. Lord, make us strong.”

God has spoken clearly. When we empty our cup of self-reliance and go to him with that empty cup, he will gladly fill it for us, teaching us in the process that nothing really depends on us. In this spirit, a soldier once wrote, “I asked God for power that I might have the praise of men; I was given weakness that I might feel the need of God.”

God cannot pour his riches into a cup that is already full, so take your *empty* cup to him. When weaknesses trouble you, say with Paul, “When I am weak, then I am strong.”

## — Prayer —

*Lord, sometimes we feel so awfully weak. We wonder how we can cope with the problems of the day. May our weaknesses become blessings in disguise as they teach us to look always to you for help. May your strength be made perfect in our weaknesses. Amen.*