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A MUTE CHRISTIAN

By: C. D. Cole

Psalm 39:9: *“I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.”*

In these words we are told what the conduct of David was when under affliction. We are not told what the trouble was; he experienced many. It might have been the long period of chastening, because of his terrible sin, or it might have been the time of Absalom’s rebellion. We cannot know. We learn from this text that it is the duty of God’s people to be mute and silent under the greatest afflictions, the saddest providence, and the sharpest trials that they meet with. Not many of us know how to behave ourselves in seasons of trouble.

We will first make a negative approach to our subject. We will see what this silence is not, and then learn what a gracious and prudent silence is, bringing our message to a close by observing what are some of the lessons and benefits of afflictions.

WHAT THIS SILENCE IS NOT

It is not a stoical silence. The stoics were the followers of Zeno, who taught that men ought to be indifferent to either pain or

pleasure. They should never rejoice at anything good nor mourn for any evil. Quintus Fabius Maximus, when he heard that his wife and daughter, whom he tenderly loved, had been killed by a falling house, and that a son had died at the same time in Umbria, did not even change his countenance, but went on with the affairs of the kingdom as though nothing had occurred. But this was not the silence of David.

Psalm 51:1-3: *“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.”*

This was to be without natural affection, which is sinful. And, this sin is to mark the last days. II Timothy 3:1-5: *“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of*

those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.”

It is not a silence for policy’s sake. Many are silent out of mere policy. Many a pastor, who is silent on certain things ought to speak out. He ought to cry aloud and spare not. All our actions are determined either by principle or policy. I Samuel 10:26: *“And Saul also went home to Gibeah; and there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched.”*

It is not a foolish silence. Proverbs 17:28: *“Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding.”* Lots of people would not show what fools they are, if they did not talk so much. Silence was so highly honored among the Romans that they erected altars to it. But this was not the silence of our text.

(Continued on page 3)

MOTIVE IN CHRISTIAN WORK

By: Dr. C. D. Cole

II Corinthians 4:5: “For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.”

Introduction: For Jesus’ sake is the primary, the all-inclusive, and over-all motive for everything we do as Christians. This was the motive of God in saving us, for we read that God hath for Christ’s sake forgiven us.

Our text is relative to the preaching of the gospel. “For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.” Our primary motive in the work of the ministry is love for Jesus and obedience to His command; but there is a secondary and worthy motive in doing it for love of souls and our desire to be a blessing. The primary motive “for Jesus’ sake” is not contrary to the secondary motive of love for lost souls and a desire to be a blessing to others. Romans 9:1: “I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, by conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost.” Romans 10:1: “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.” II Timothy 2:10: “Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.”

There may be many motives appealed to in urging duty upon people; many motives within the all-inclusive motive of “for Jesus’ sake.” I am going to talk about one thing and show you how this principle is illustrated. I am going to talk about the duty of Christian giving. I am going to confine my remarks to one great collection; the collection Paul took over a period of years among the churches of Europe for the poor saints at Jerusalem. This collection is directly discussed in I Corinthians 16:1-4: “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. And if it be

meet that I go also, they shall go with me.” See II Corinthians chapters 8 and 9 also. Romans 15:25-28: “But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things. When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.” Acts 20:4: “And there accompanied him into Asia Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus.” Acts 24:17: “Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings.”

Paul laid down seven rules to govern this collection and then appealed to many motives; some higher and some lower. Let us look first at the rules for this offering:

As to the time. They should, every first day of the week, lay by in store until the accumulated fund was ready to be forwarded.

Each person was to give according as God had prospered him. I Corinthians 16:2: “Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him...”

It must be voluntary. II Corinthians 8:12: “For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.”

It must be deliberate, that is, according to a previous purpose. II Corinthians 9:7: “Every man according as he purposed in his heart, so let him give...”

It must be cheerfully done, not grudgingly or of compulsion. II Corinthians 9:7: “...not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver.”

The giver must first give himself to the Lord. II Corinthians 8:5: “And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us

by the will of God.”

It is to promote equality. II Corinthians 8:13-15: “For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality: As it is written, he that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack.”

MOTIVES

Now the motive to which the appeals were made are both higher and lower. The higher motives were:

The example of Christ, or for Jesus’ sake. II Corinthians 8:9: “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.”

The principle of sowing and reaping. II Corinthians 9:6: “But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.”

This service not only supplied the need of the poor saints but caused them to thank God for you. II Corinthians 9:11, 12: “Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God. For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God.”

The recipients of the bounty glorified God on account of the giver’s subjection to God. II Corinthians 9:13: “Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men.”

The prayers of the recipients. II Corinthians 9:14: “And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you.”

The lower motives; not unworthy but lower:

The example of the Macedonian churches. II Corinthians 8:1-5: “Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; How that in a

great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.”

They had pledged to help and should redeem their pledge. II Corinthians 8:11: “Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have.”

The zeal of their pledges had stimulated others, and shame would follow if their pledges were not redeemed. II Corinthians 9:2: “For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many.”

Paul had boasted of their readiness, and he would be put to shame if their pledges were not redeemed. II Corinthians 9:3, 4: “Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready: Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting.”

A MUTE CHRISTIAN (Continued from page 1)

It is not a sullen silence.

There are people who, when they are under the afflicting hand of God, have no mouths to plead with God, no lips to praise God, nor any tongue to justify Him. This is to disobey Philippians 4:6, 7: “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” To be sullenly silent is to be troubled with a dumb devil. This dumb devil once possessed

Ahab. I Kings 21:4: “And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him: for he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers. And he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread.”

This is the silence of a pouter. And of all the folks, deliver me from the pouter.

It is not the silence of despair. There are times when people are overwhelmed with difficulties; the future is so dark and forbidding that they cannot speak. With some it is financial difficulties; a question of bread and meat for themselves and families. With others it is poor health; they do not know what it is to be without pain. Their bodies are being literally riddled by disease. With others it is secret trouble; things that cannot be whispered into human ears, and for which no human sympathy can be elicited. A silence of despair! This will be the silence of the lost, when they stand before the judgment seat of God. Revelation 20:12-15: “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: And another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” Despair will make them speechless. May God save us from such despair.

PRUDENT AND GRACIOUS SILENCE

Now there is a silence which is prudent and gracious; a silence that honors God, and results in blessing to the soul, when under afflictions.

This silence includes a sight of God, and the acknowledgment of God as the author of affliction. Psalm 39:9: “I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.” David looks through secondary causes to the great First Cause. Let’s look at Job. This was after he had lost all his worldly possessions and his children. Job 2:7-10: “So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown. And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes. Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity: curse God, and die. But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips.” Aaron: “If God’s hand is not seen in the trouble, the heart will do nothing but fret and rage.”

It includes a view of God’s greatness. The admonition for this hour is Psalm 46:10: “Be still, and know that I am God...” If we could have the proper conception of God’s majesty and greatness, we would not be so quick to murmur and complain in His presence. Habakkuk 2:20: “But the LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.”

It includes a recognition of the Sovereignty of God. God has a right to do with us as He pleases. He could send every one of us to

hell and remain just, so far as any obligation to us is concerned. Every blessing is from His gracious hand, and a matter of mercy. Humble yourselves under His mighty hand. I Peter 5:6: *"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."* The Thracians, being ignorant of the sovereignty of God, when it thundered, would express their madness and displeasure by shooting their arrows against the face of heaven.

It includes submission to God. James 4:7: *"Submit yourselves therefore to God, Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."* It means heart silence as well as lip silence. Quietness within as well as quietness without. The man who bites his lips, while boiling on the inside does not have that silence that is prudent and gracious.

SOME LESSONS AND BENEFITS OF AFFLICTIONS

It weans us from the world. All of us are more or less worldly, and without sorrows and afflictions, we would be more so than we are. The Bible describes the world in Psalm 63:1 as: *"...a dry and thirsty land, where no water is."* And God intends for us to prove this in our experience. His word also affirms that this world is a *"dark place,"* II Peter 1:19. And he means for us to learn that this is so.

It casts us back the more upon God. By nature we are filled with the spirit of independency. Troubles are designed to empty us of our self-sufficiency. A study of the four gospels reveals that it was trouble and sorrow that caused people to come to Christ. It was trouble and illness that brought

them to the great physician. A nobleman came to Christ, but why? Because his son was at the point of death. Jairus sought out our Lord; why? Because his little daughter was so low. The Canaanitish woman came to Christ; why? Because her daughter was grievously tormented. Mary and Martha sent a message to the absent Saviour; why? Because their brother was so sick.

It makes the promises of God more precious to us. There is many a text which no commentator can helpfully expound; it must be interpreted by experience. Spurgeon was wont to say that there were some verses in the Bible written, as it were, with secret ink, which must be held before the fire of adversity before they become visible.