

WHEN GOD HIDES HIS FACE

... what then?

Have you ever felt that God has withdrawn Himself? ...that He has hid His face from you? ...that the heavens have become as brass?

Possibly all of us have at one time or another.

But for those who have dedicated themselves to seeking the Lord in loving intimacy and holy abandon, this experience can be specially excruciating.

For those who have started down this road only to find none of the joyful experiences they had been led to expect, the results can be traumatic. For those who found what they were looking for only to lose it again, the disappointment can be shattering.

Now, we could spend our time trying to discover why we suffer such disappointment. What did we do wrong? Why does God permit it?

WHAT TO DO?

But, why not ask instead, "What do we do now? Where do we go from here?"

We forget something far too readily. Our relationship with God is founded in the Word of God. Jesus says in John 5 that we have neither heard the voice of God nor seen His shape ...BUT if we search the scriptures, we will find they testify of Him.

"With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments" said the sweet singer of Israel in Psalm 119:10. May that be our refrain, too, when God seems to hide His face from us.

Does it seem a terrible affliction to you that He should hide His face? Then remember the Psalmist's words in 119:92: *"Unless thy law had been my delight, I should have perished in mine affliction."*

You see, my dear brother or sister in Christ, *"For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven"* (Psalm 119:89).

Everything else, including our perception of our relationship with God, may change. But God's Word never!

So when all else is shaken, and God seems to have forsaken us, we can turn to His Word as our refuge night and day. Instead of spending less time alone with the Lord, we should spend more. But now, spend more of it reading and studying the Word, seeking not so much to find Him in our spirits as in His Word.

At first you may read seeking His comfort; but then begin to know Him as revealed there. Study His glorious titles and attributes. Read passages that reveal the glorious nature of God and His Christ so He may have the place He deserves in your heart and life.

Then build the habit of reading the Word systematically to let God speak through it as He will, just as you have built the habit of remaining quietly before Him in prayer to let Him speak to you by His Spirit.

WHAT IF I'VE SINNED?

If it's your sin or your failure to follow the Lord that has hid his face from you, what better course of action than to turn to the Word? *"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse His way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word"* (Psalm 119:9).

In fact, where better to start seeking the Lord in His Word than right in this great Psalm which so honors the Word of God? Let the Word rebuild our shaken faith that: *"Thou art good and doest good"* (Psalm 119:68).

Yes, indeed, *"It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes"* (Psalm 119:71).

Don't stop waiting quietly in God's presence just because it hasn't met with the results that you anticipated.

If you do, your seeking for God in His Word may degenerate into a letter-of-the-law carnality. Or, in utter disappointment, you could find it being replaced, on the other extreme, with a wild pursuit of a *sense or experience* of God that is equally carnal.

It's from everything but Himself that our loving God is seeking to deliver us. It's into the beautiful freedom of loving acceptance of all that God is, does, permits, and provides ...it's into this He calls us.

It's for this purpose that He often chooses to withdraw from us many of the things He gives us that we substitute for Himself. It's for this purpose He may withdraw any feeling He has permitted us, and that we may have begun to think of as Himself.

Only in this way may He at last become something close to the ALL that He wants to be for us now and that He will be throughout eternity.

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