

When God is Silent Part 1

By Christopher Lyons

[audio recording does not begin from the start of the event]

Speaker 1:

And then I'll introduce our speaker. Let's pray, Lord, it's so great to go to a school that takes time out so we can check our spiritual temperature. And it's good to have resources like Doctor Lyons, Lord. And we want to pray today that your spirit would use this in our lives in an effective way. We pray in Christ's name. Amen. I'd like to introduce Dr. Lyons? He's going to be speaking this morning on why is God sometimes silent. So let's give him a round of applause as he comes.

Christopher Lyons:

Thank you. I just invite some of you who are still standing in the back. I don't mind turning this into a theater in the round or whatever. I see some seats over here on the side and those of you who are comfortable on the floor, I will have to confess I guess I underestimated the interest in this subject. I only made 100 copies of a five page outline on the Book of Job. Maybe some of you have access to Xerox machine and you could take that copy and duplicate some more copies for us for tomorrow.

But I have at least 100 copies of the outline on the Book of Job. As I say, I may have underestimated the interest in this subject because this is a subject for the most part that would appeal to older Christians. I don't know why it is in the Providence of God, but God seems to

meet us as young Christians with miraculous signs and wonders. And I'm sure that if we had time this morning, there are many of you who could stand up and really give testimony to the mighty acts of God.

The powerful way that God showed himself to you when you were wrestling with a gospel that had been presented to you. And God by miraculous and powerful signs showed you his existence and his power. And this so often happens in the life of a person under conviction or the life of a brand new Christian. And I don't mean in the three days as we study the Book of Job in any way to put down the fact of the power of God and God's way of speaking to us.

What is it he says is not my word, like a hammer, is not my word like a hammer that breaks up rock. And God has powerful ways to speak to us. And yet it's interesting that as a person begins to mature in Jesus Christ, you don't always see those signs and wonders. You don't always see this miraculous power. It's almost as if now God is working and dealing with us in our lives to show us that without faith it is impossible to please God. That those who come to God must believe that he is and that he is the rewarder of those who diligently seek him.

And really, it has been my experience as Christians grow older, and I don't mean to depress you young people, but there are sicknesses. There are challenges. There are problems that come into life. What was it? Our New England philosopher, Henry David Thoreau, who said Most people live their lives in quiet desperation. Now I look at you all you're young, and I'm sure that there's no desperation in your life. But what is there about life? It has its way of making us desperate. Some of you have not to this point known real heartache or real tragedy.

But I can promise you in your lifetime you will. There's something about life that causes us to run up across the loss of parents, the loss of a dear friend, things that we never expected, things that we cannot anticipate. And life faces us with these things. And we would say, Well, the God who met me when I was 15 and showed me His presence by mighty powers and by mighty miraculous signs, he'll show me those signs and those wonders now. But why is it sometimes that as you're going through those trials as older Christians, God doesn't seem to split the heavens open and give you all sorts of explanations and all sorts of answers.

But God is silent. Well, the Book of Job is a rather unique book in Scripture and speaks just to that issue of the problem of suffering. And it plays a very important role in Scripture. For you see, without the Book of Job, we might all just go along with the philosophy of the people in Jesus day. Remember when in John 9, Jesus saw the man who was blind and all the disciples saw was the problem of evil and the problem of suffering. And they asked Jesus the question, who sinned? This man or his parents, that he was born blind.

And you see, the philosophy of Jesus Day was the same philosophy that you find in the Old Testament, the philosophy that if you really have God's approval on your life, if you have God's hand upon your life, God's blessing, there aren't going to be any problems. There's not going to be any blindness. There's not going to be any suffering. If there are problems, if there is suffering, it is obvious that you sinned or your parents sinned or somebody has done something. And God is finally caught up with you.

And God is getting even with you. Now, that philosophy is not just left with the disciples of Jesus Day. It's a common understanding. It's a common philosophy in our own day that somehow, if you're suffering, if there's sin, if there's a problem in your life, you must have sinned somewhere. And God has finally caught up with you and God is zapping you. The thing is you're going to go to church on Sunday morning or you're going to catch diphtheria or something like that. Fact that if you don't shape up, you're going to get sick, you're going to suffer.

Now, I say that Job, the Book of Job plays a very unique and important role in Scripture because of course, suffering is a vital part of the Christian faith, the Christian life. You look to see that Jesus said, as long as you are in the world, you will know tribulation. As long as you are in the world, you will know suffering. The apostle Paul, in all of his letters used as his greeting, grace and peace as he wrote to the churches. But remember, he wrote to Timothy, and those are the only differences in the Epistles.

In his letter to Timothy, he wrote, grace, mercy and peace, praying God's mercy upon his young son in the faith. Timothy, why didn't he write that to all the churches? Grace, mercy and peace. Why? Because as long as the church is in the world, Christians are not going to know mercy from this world. Christians are going to know persecution. Christians are going to know suffering. They're going to know trial. And then, of course, there is what? The suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ. Has anyone ever suffered as Jesus suffered?

And so if we go along with a common belief, the common understanding that suffering shows the judgment of God, that if you have problems in your life, it shows that you need to shape up

spiritually. There was no one who had greater sufferings. There was no one who had greater problems in the moment when he needed his friends the most, they deserted him. They walked off on him. There was no one who went through greater suffering than the Lord Jesus Christ. And so you see, apart from the Book of Job, we might well buy into the thinking, the philosophy of the world and completely misunderstand what was happening in Jesus life.

And you know, for instance, the Jews have done that. The Jews were looking for a Messiah who would come as a triumphant leader and as a triumphant King. Someone who is going to lead them against the power, the forces of Rome, and lead them to become a mighty powerful nation again. And to this day, the Jews look to the return of a triumphant Messiah, a triumphant King. Now we Christians look forward to that, too, in the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, as David Hawking, so powerfully and ably, spoke about in our first session this morning.

But they weren't ready though there were just as many prophecies, maybe even more, concerning the fact that the Messiah would be the suffering Messiah, the suffering Savior. They weren't ready to accept that it was a stumbling block. It was a rock of offense to them. They will not accept it to this day. And yet you're here at a Christian University because you are committed to the fact that all we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned every one to his own way. But the Lord hath laid on him, Jesus Christ, the iniquity of us all.

He was bruised for our transgressions. He was wounded for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him. And then triumphantly and with his stripes we are healed. And so we have a commitment to Jesus as the suffering Savior. We have a commitment to Jesus Christ as

the returning King. And so this book of Job was. There are probably two periods in which it may have been written. We're not sure of who the author is. Some would point to the fact that it's probably the oldest book of the Bible that if you were writing the Bible or displaying it in chronological order, the book of Job probably would come first.

It seems that Job, at least was a contemporary of Abraham, lived somewhat at about the same time. The fact that he lived as long as Abraham and these men of the patriarchal period before you know the sickness and suffering weakened man's fallen body, and he begins to live 60 or 70 years. But the fact that Job lived as long as he lived. And it seems the description of the culture, et cetera, would put Job as a contemporary of Abraham. It seems also that it may well have been written in the days of Solomon.

Solomon is described as a great poet, a great author, wrote many, many books, only a few of which exist today, and some would feel that if Solomon was not the author, at least it was written in the time of Solomon and by somebody who had been influenced by Solomon's style and Solomon's approach to writing. It is an epic poem, you know Homer's Iliad, and Odyssey, What we call or the what is it, Tennyson's idols of the King, the life story of King Arthur. That these are called epic poems.

Well, the Book of Job is an epic poem that more or less tells us the story of a man who may well have been a contemporary of Abraham and a man who is an historical character. We're not sure that King Arthur was an historical character. That may well be just an epic poem, a myth. But you can turn in the book of Ezekiel. Ezekiel. Let's see. I've got the reference here. Ezekiel 14.

Let's look at that for just a moment. Book of Ezekiel and Job is referred to in Ezekiel 14 as an historical character.

If you believe in Noah, if you believe in the others, you must believe in Job. Also Ezekiel 14 and down somewhere around the 14:14. Even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, they could save only themselves by their righteousness declares the sovereign Lord. God is speaking about his judgment, and he says that his judgment is coming upon the city and upon the nation. And even if they were righteous men such as these three great men of the Old Testament, Noah, Daniel, and Job.

And so we're not just looking at a myth. We're looking at someone who's referred to also in the New Testament. We're looking to someone who has referred to in the Bible as an historical character. So let's turn to the book of Job, and I hope if you stay with us these three days that you'll bring your Bible with you, I'm really going to be concentrating for the most part on the first three chapters and then the final chapter. Although I want to look at some of the highlights with you because the three friends of Job give something of the philosophy that Job has to wrestle with, the philosophy that Christians have to wrestle with even in this day, as more or less you feel, if there's any suffering, any problem in your life, God is going to get you.

So this isn't the wizard of Uz. It's the land of Uz in Job 1:1. And interestingly enough, that's probably a territory on the east side of the Dead Sea, probably into Saudi Arabia. And we may have tanks and planes and young men and women in approximately that territory today. In this crisis in the Persian Gulf area, we may well have forces in that approximate land. In the land of

Uz, there lived a man whose name was Job, an historical figure. This is not part of the poetry yet the poetry, the epic poem doesn't start until about the third chapter.

But note this. This is brought up again and again in Scripture. Nobody else seems to agree with it, but the author of the book says this man was blameless. He was upright. He feared God. He shunned evil. So as you look at that particular area in that particular territory, here's a man like yourself, who really loves God, who really wants to turn away from evil, turn away from sin, who really wants to serve God. The Bible is unequivocal on this fact. Job is a man who is righteous before God.

Everybody is going to say Job, there must be sin in your life. And poor old Job is going to protest just as you're going through some difficult circumstance and feel that you must have blown it somewhere. Or some friend even suggests that you must have goofed up somewhere. What does the Bible have to say of Job? The same thing that God's going to say about him in just a few moments. Blameless, upright, feared God, shunned evil. Isn't it wonderful? We worry about our reputation sometimes. Isn't it wonderful to be more concerned about what God has to say about your life than what people had?

He had seven sons and three daughters. He owned 7000 sheep. He's one of the wealthiest men in all that part of the world. Sometimes we feel that wealth in itself is a curse. And obviously, if you're going to serve God, if you're serious about the things of God, why you're probably going to be poor all your life. It's interesting that some of the most Godly men in scripture are also

some of the most prosperous. You know I've seen it so often in my ministry and in my life, it's almost a guarantee.

If you love God, no matter what career you choose, you're probably going to be successful. You're up against people who are carousing, people who are on drugs, people who are living with their own guilt of cheating on their family, et cetera. And when you are living clean and when you're not encumbered by all of this stuff and you can take anybody on, you really have an advantage going for you. Well, Job had some advantages going for him in his life, and he had God's prosperity. In fact, we read at the end of Job 1:3, he's the greatest man among all the people of the east. Who could ever believe that anything could ever happen in the life of a man such as this?

Job 1:4-5 tells us of his spiritual concern for his family. Obviously, it's a close-knit family. Everybody is getting together to celebrate everybody else's birthday, and maybe the parties get a little wild. And I sometimes wonder how some of us Anglo-Saxon Christians are going to fare when we get in heaven, especially those of us from Boston, where there's just a little reserve and a little standoffishness. And then we're going to get together with our brothers and sisters who have come to know God through Jesus Christ from, like the Grecian cities of Corinth.

Man, they knew how to celebrate. When they get to this wedding feast of the Lamb, they're going to pull out all the stops and they're going to celebrate. I can see some of us American Christians a little more reserved, sort of standing along the wall. None of us know how to dance,

sort of standing around the wall watching. Well, unless God changes us with a frown on our face at some of the things that are going on. But this is a family man. They really enjoy one another.

They know how to celebrate to the point where Job isn't quite sure as to whether or not somebody might have sinned against God and all this joyousness. So he spends his time offering sacrifices just in case one of his kids has goofed it up. Job 1:6, who's in charge? You know, I don't want to discourage any of you in these three days as we study this book and we're going to be looking at some hurt and some heartache. But let's say that the greatest fact of all of wisdom and knowledge and literature anywhere is Genesis 1:1.

In the beginning, God, God is. God exists. God is all powerful. God is in control of everything, even Satan, even evil. And so one day, Job 1:6, the angels came to present themselves before the Lord and Satan also came with them. Now, remember, our God is not just the God of the planet Earth, nor our solar system, nor the Milky Way, but all of the universe. All of the unbelievable universe is not large enough to contain his power and his glory. And how does he operate this universe?

How does he run this universe through these created beings, these Angels who are way off in distant, distant, distant solar system, somewhere planets. And it seems that by command performance, God has called all of his agents in. Isn't it exciting to recognize that someday we're going to join with the Angels of God in administrating the universe? I like what C. S. Lewis has to say. I don't preach this as gospel. But remember, C. S. Lewis, in his book, *Out of the Silent Planet*, talks about the Earth as the quarantined planet, that all the universe is teeming with life.

Sometimes, as you hear the question asked, is there life out there in the universe? We put our telescopes to try to find out if there's life out there. And the problem is, even if you say Hello, this is Chris Lyons calling. It's going to take 100 years to get to one of the nearest planets and then 100 years to get on back. And I'm not going to be around to hear the answer when you start to think of all of this great universe. And then the question is asked, Is there life out there?

It's sort of like two fleas on a dog asking the question, do you really believe there's life on any other dog? I thought that was funny, but C. S. Lewis talks about Earth as the quarantine planet because of sin. And because we would infect the entire universe with our rebellion against the great King, with our rebellion against God if we could, that's what sin is that Earth has been quarantined, that Earth is isolated and there's a great host of witnesses. Hebrews 12, maybe looking on to see what in the world is going on in that rebellious planet, the visited planet.

You know, this is the planet where God himself has broken into history and has walked upon this Earth. And remember, at the cross, the Earth is shrouded in darkness, almost as if God did not want the universe to see what man in his sin and his rebellion would dare to do in shaking his fist in the face of God? But isn't it great to know that someday the curse is going to be taken away? It already has been in your life. Someday the quarantine is going to be lifted.

And we are going to rejoin this great universe that seems to go on forever and ever. And of course, it doesn't. Only God is forever and ever. Only God is eternal. But someday you and I are going to rejoin the universe. Well, that's an aside, but one day you'll find a lot of that in the next

couple of days. One day the Angels came to present themselves before the Lord and Satan also came with them. We wonder about this. Satan having access to heaven. Satan having access to God.

What in the world is this all about. Maybe we don't understand it all. Except it seems as if Satan didn't have any choice. He was commanded to come. This is a command performance. He has to report before God. And the Lord said to Satan, Where have you come from? Satan answered the Lord from roaming through the Earth and going back and forth in it. Can't you see why there's so much restlessness for those in rebellion, so much restlessness when you've been in sin Haven't you sensed that you sin against God?

You sin against yourself and you can't sleep. You can't eat you're not at rest. You're just sort of following this father of lies. And there's a restlessness and he's been going back and forth through the Earth. Remember we're told in 1 Peter that Satan is like a roaring lion. And sort of a lion roars enough that you're frightened of it. One of the characteristics, too, though, that you always have to be careful of, is the whole cat family. Once a lion chooses its subject, it's prey.

It will not give up until it has made the kill. There may be another animal slower and weaker that suddenly he spots. But that's all right. He has selected the target and he will not stop until he has made the kill. How we need the power of God in the midst of temptation, how we need the power of God in the midst of the trials and the awfulness of life. And then, you know, Satan has an awful or the lion or the cat family. And I know cats are now more popular than dogs.

And some of you are cat lovers. But the problem with a cat is it plays with its prey. I was coming home one time when I lived in Massachusetts and I hate cats. But this cat, this cat had gotten a little chipmunk and they were playing a game, you know, like the little chipmunk would get away and the cat would pounce after it and get it and start the little game again. And then it'll let it get away again and then pounce after it. And it was a fun little game.

Except, you know, I know what the end result of that game was going to be. The time would come. Finally, when the cat would be tired of the game and the chipmunk was going to get killed, baby chipmunk. So I decided to come to the rescue and the chipmunk gets away and I go running in to keep the cat from getting it. And the chipmunk starts up the tray and the cat's just looking at me with those fierce eyes and looking at that chipmunk. And just knowing that the moment had come when he's either going to go and get that chipmunk or it's all over and he makes a dash for the chipmunk.

I make a dash for the cat and the chipmunk gets away and I won the victory. A cat hated me but you know, that's what Satan is doing in your life. And he plays with you and lets you get away. And, oh, you know, you're free for a month or two. And then that same old anger. What is it? They say nobody ever forgets where he buried the hatchet, that same old anger, that same old revenge, that same old fear, that same old lust, that same old problem rears its ugly head again.

And the game continues. And it's only when God comes to the rescue. But finally, we are set free. But then let me just share this with you with students. Satan will play with you for your lifetime if you let him because he wants to take you out at the moment of maximum advantage.

He'll let something go on in your life that you don't take all that seriously. Your anger, like the coach. I can't think of his name right now who went out and started beating on the football player and lost his reputation, lost a lifetime of coaching in just that one moment.

Put anger all of his life, probably something that he faced as a high schooler. As a college student, I'm sure he was not a Christian, but I've met Christians the same way. You know, college student had a little problem with pornography, would sneak away every once in a while, down to the adult bookstores in town and who cared and who really knew. And he got away with it. And Satan let it stay in his life and let it stay in his life. And as an older man, he was a pastor.

That stuff in his life for a lifetime. And then into immorality as a pastor. And now Satan takes him out. Why? Because now he can take out his kids. He can take out his wife. He can take out half the church, et cetera. And that's just the way Satan is is like that roaring lion. He's a member of the cat family where you may not take seriously something that's in your life right now you'd better. Because if you don't, he's just going to wait five years, ten years.

You're married now you've got children now. You've got a reputation, you've got a career and he wants to take you out at the moment of maximum advantage. So God says to Satan here in verse five, where have you come from? Satan answers, the Lord roaming through the Earth and going forth, going back and forth in it. Now notice it's the Lord who initiates this challenge. He says, Have you considered my servant job? Now I'm sure if Job were in on the conversation at this point, he'd say, Why did my name ever have to come up?

What in the world? Why couldn't you be talking about Abraham? Why couldn't you be talking about somebody else? Why did my name ever have to come up? But God says, Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one like him. Now, the author of the Book of Job has already told us up in Job 1:1, blameless, upright, feared God, shunned evil. Now listen, God has the very same opinion of his servant, and that's the most important thing, isn't it? What is it they say? Reputation is what people know about you.

Character is what you know about yourself. Job had a reputation. A great reputation. Isn't it wonderful to see that he has an equally great reputation with a King of the universe with God, as God says, he is blameless, upright, a man who fears God, a man who shuns evil. I'm going to have to stop in just a few moments, so maybe I can stop with this particular section then of Satan just sneering. And Satan means accuser. Isn't it interesting that Satan is both a tempter and the accuser?

And that's where some young Christians, especially get very depressed and discouraged because they don't understand that. That Satan plays ping pong with us. On one hand, he comes and he tempts us. He tempts us with a thought. He tempts us to an action. And in the power of Jesus Christ, we stand against him. No, I used to do that. I used to love that. I used to think that way, but I hate it. Now I used to curse God, but now I love to praise Him.

Now I love to say Our Father, which art in heaven hallowed be thy name. God changes us from people who love to sin into people who love to praise him and worship him. And so we stand against the tempter. And then what? He hits us as the accuser and says, what kind of Christian

are you? If you were truly a Christian, you wouldn't have even had a thought like that. You wouldn't even have had a temptation like that. And he gets you coming and going. And this is why you have to understand what James tells us in James 1.

Hey, rejoice. When you fall into various trials, rejoice when you fall into various temptations, why? A couple of reasons. First of all, it proves that a change has taken place in your life. There was a time when you would love to have gone back into that stuff. You were planning at 06:00 in the morning maybe. How you were going to get drunker than a skunk before the day was over, et cetera. It proves that a change has taken place in your life. Secondly, it gives you an opportunity, doesn't it?

To let God know how much you love him. Oh, God, I love you so much more than that. I praise you. I thank you for taking me out of that. And then, thirdly, what? Temptation gives us an opportunity to build spiritual muscle. You meet a lot of Christian young people, such as yourselves, physically, great shape, hard bodies, et cetera. But spiritually soft and flabby. And like the person who should have been on oatmeal oat brand that David Hawking spoke about this morning. So Satan sneers. He's the accuser as Satan responds and says, Have you not, Job 1:10.

Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands so that his flock and herds are spread throughout the land. But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has and surely he will curse you to his face. Do you notice that God never corrects Satan here? Satan says, sure he worships you. Sure he's

upright and blameless. And why shouldn't he be? You have put a hedge around him and around everything that he has.

I want to close with that thought because it's true. Do you understand that? Do you know that this morning, no matter what you're going through, no matter what the challenge, no matter what the difficulty, God is your Father, you belong to him and he has put a hedge around you. Satan cannot get to you. Nothing can happen to you. But that, first of all, your Father allows it. As you're married and as you have a family, isn't it wonderful to know that our God will be our God and the Father and children and the Father and Savior of our children?

God places a hedge around his people. God places a hedge around their property. It doesn't mean as we're going to see that earthquakes won't take it away. Storms won't come. But none of this can happen. But that God knows all about it. I don't know what you're going through, but I just challenge you with that as we close. God knows all about it and it couldn't have happened. But that it's in his plan for you. God bless you all. Thanks for. I know some of you have been very uncomfortable sitting there on the floor.

I appreciate your careful attention. Let me just pray with you all. Okay. God our father. I thank you for these young people. I thank you for their commitment to you through Jesus Christ. I thank you for the impact that you're going to make upon the world through their lives. You know our father, that some of these young people are hurting. And they wonder why you're silent. Help us to understand more of this in these days ahead in Jesus name. Amen. God bless you all.