

Silence Is Not Absence

By: David Burruss

Last Tuesday while Doug and I were studying together, he looked at me and asked something that really made me pause. He said, "Why do people not believe in God?"

I paused before answering, because there are a lot of reasons. But if I am honest, I think most of the time it comes down to pain.

Bad things that happened and never seemed to heal. Prayers that felt ignored. Loss that did not make sense. Moments when God felt distant.

That feeling of distance can shake a person. It can quietly erode trust. It can make faith feel fragile.

That night as I was lying in bed, that question came back to me. I started thinking about the seasons in my own life when God felt quiet. And I remembered something simple that has steadied me more than once.

The teacher is always quiet during the test.

Nobody really warns you about that part of faith. We are told that God is faithful, and He is. We are told that He answers prayer, and He does. But we do not always talk about the silence. We do not always prepare each other for the days when you pray and nothing changes. The moments when you give everything you have and life still hits back harder. The nights when you beg God for a sign and all you get is stillness.

But Scripture shows us that silence is not the same as absence. In Psalm 13:1, David cried out, "How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me?" He was honest. He felt forgotten. He felt like God was hiding. And I love that the Bible does not edit that out. It does not clean up his emotion or make him sound more spiritual than he was.

David felt the silence. Yet he kept praying. That tells me something important. Feeling distance does not mean you have lost faith. Sometimes it means you are fighting to keep it.

James writes in James 1:3-4, "knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing." Testing is not punishment. It is development. It is growth happening under pressure. It is God forming something steady and mature in us that could not be formed any other way.

I think about Job often when I wrestle with this. In the middle of his loss and confusion, he said in Job 23:10, "But He knows the way that I take. When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold." Job did not always hear God clearly. There were long stretches of silence. But he clung to one truth. God knew. God saw. God understood the road he was walking.

That is what keeps me steady too. God is watching how we respond when we cannot hear Him. How we hold on when nothing makes sense. How we show up when no one is clapping. How we keep walking when the path feels dark and uncertain.

"For we walk by faith, not by sight" 2 Corinthians 5:7. Faith is not built in bright seasons. It is built in quiet ones. It is built when there is no visible evidence, when there is no applause, when the only thing you have to stand on is the character of God.

And here is something that encourages me deeply. Every time you thought you were alone, you made it through anyway. Every challenge that looked like it would break you did not. Every tear-filled night eventually turned into

morning. Somehow, strength showed up. Breath stayed in your lungs. Grace carried you further than you thought possible.

Hebrews 13:5 reminds us, “For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’” Never includes the silent seasons. It includes the hospital rooms, the unanswered prayers, the long waiting, and the dark nights.

So if you are walking through one of those quiet seasons right now, take a breath. The stillness does not mean you are forgotten. It may mean you are being strengthened in ways you cannot yet see. Roots are growing deep underground, where no one applauds and no one notices.

The Teacher may be quiet.

But He is still in the room.