

Perplexed, But Not In Despair

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On August 17th when I wrote the blog post *The End of All Things Is Near*, I didn't mean for it to be the end of my blog as well. However, it has been a month since I have posted anything and rather than explain, I just want to get right into this week's post.

There are times in your life when the Lord will ask you to just remain motionless and let him begin to work things around you. I have been struggling for almost a year now trying to envision a future for a small church in Cambridge City, Indiana called *The River*. We know God worked a miracle for *Banner Christian* in Portland, and that miracle was right under our noses. God was in the process of preparing and strengthening Pastor Mike and Angie Burk to take the lead of that church. They have that same tenacious ability to move forward in the face of troubles and trials as I have learned over the years.

I have come to understand that God is doing the same with *The River*. I have wondered about my investment there when I served as Pastor of *The River*. Am I just hating to see it all be for nothing? Am I concerned about my divided attention between these sister churches and my calling at Calvary? Am I unwilling to disappoint the friends I made in the community where *The River* exists? Am I perplexed? I would probably say yes to all these thoughts and self-accusations. Yet, there is this underlying feeling in my spirit to remain motionless, because God is working things around me and does not want me to move or do anything on my own.

⁸ We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair;

⁹ persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.

*¹⁰ We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus,
so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.*

*¹¹ For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake,
so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body."*

2nd Corinthians 4:8-11, NIV.

The Apostle Paul too, knew what it was like to be hard pressed and perplexed. It feels like death working in you. However, he recognized that the death he felt was a yielding of his will and his way to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. How hard that guidance is to take when the word from the Lord is, "Wait! Don't do anything, I'm working on something." So I have come to know that while God was telling me to stay still he was working on someone else, telling them to move into his will.

So the awesome truth I find is this: When God is asking you to stand still and be patient, he may not be working on you, but on someone else, who will eventually be a part of your life. This is so true. I relate it to Susan and I. I know that before we were married, God was busy working on each of us to prepare us for each other. I've come to understand that about churches also. God prepares his people to receive the next Pastor, and God prepares the Pastor to be a blessing to his people.

As things play out at *The River*, I have found rest in knowing that God was at work all the time he was asking me to be still. Had I done something, it would have hindered his plan. Sometimes remaining motionless (which feels like limbo or death) is the greatest faith you can express in the Lord.

Let's liken it to going to the dentist. There are so many thoughts going through your head about what the dentist is going to do. However, his only instructions for you while he is working is, "Don't move."

The people of Calvary have come to know that I am not one for sitting still. I am always pressing forward on one front or another. If I can't make progress in one area, then I flip over to another and press on it. All the while the bigger picture becomes more and more clear in my mind and in reality.

As Susan and I worked each week at *The River*, there was a deep sense that we were planning and preparing for someone else. I knew it at *Banner Christian* when I handled things for a while, but it was more obvious there. Banner was a District Supervised church and I knew our superintendent, Don Gifford, was working hard to envision a future for that church. I guess what concerned me was, who was working for The River. I also had an added pressure that if I wasn't doing something, then nothing would happen for them.

How wrong I was. I remember what Saul's son, Jonathan, said to his armor-bearer when he wanted to single-handedly attack an outpost of the Philistines. He said, *"Perhaps the LORD will act on our behalf. Nothing can hinder the LORD from saving, whether by many or by few."* (1st Samuel 14:6, NIV.) When God asks you to prepare, but not move, it is because he is already acting on your behalf.

Sometimes the strain of doing nothing is greater than all the effort you can put forth in trying to do something yourself. Amazingly, I was able to wait through this period and see the Lord's mighty hand as he worked for *The River* himself. In days to come, I will continue to be perplexed, carrying about this death in me, but I now see how it allows the Lord to flow through me and accomplish his will. What I have learned in this process of working with other churches equips me for greater work still at Calvary.

All the time that I thought I was divided and ineffective, the Lord was using me in a mighty way. How? By simply doing nothing, remaining motionless, and allowing him to do his awesome work.

"You did awesome things that we did not expect."

Isaiah 64:3, NIV.

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