

# A God Who Hides Himself

*Radio Broadcast*

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## **Shreveport Grace Church**

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Welcome to the Grace Abounding Broadcast brought to you by the congregation of the Shreveport Grace Church that meets at 2970 Baird Road in Shreveport, LA. My name is Ken Wimer and it is my privilege to bring to you today a message that seeks to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ and his glorious person and finished work of salvation accomplished for sinners at the cross. Please stay tuned.

I have here today a text that for some they might see a contradiction, and yet we know that in Scripture there are no contradictions so I pray that the Lord will be our teacher but it's found in Isaiah 45:15 where we read,

15 Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour.

There are certain verses of Scripture that speak volumes in few words and such is my text, but now the question that it raises is: what kind of God is it who hides himself and yet at the same time is called the Savior? Now, what I want to do is underscore two characteristics of God then that we find in Scripture and while some may see in his character a contradiction, yet by the time we search the Scriptures and the Lord, by his Spirit, opens our eyes to the God of Scripture, we see that in him is no contradiction. In fact, John said that, "In God who is light, there is not even a shadow of turning."

So what do we learn about God from this particular text where clearly he declares who he is? He says, "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour." So the first characteristic that we see here is that he is a sovereign God. Some might think, "Well, he contradicts himself because on the one hand he tells sinners to seek him and yet on the other hand we read that he is a God who hides himself." The word "hide" means "to conceal one's self carefully." When we were kids and even as adults with our children, sometimes they want us to play that game of hide-n-seek, now, what's the purpose of hiding in a game of hide-n-seek? Well, you hide in such a place as not to be found. It's a secret place and I can remember as a child and even as an adult playing with my children, loving to find a place where they could never find me. That became more and more difficult as more and more secret places were discovered. I don't want to minimize this matter of God and salvation down to a game of hide-n-see, it isn't. God is

not playing cat and mouse with sinners but when he says, "thou art a God that hidest thyself," he is declaring that he is sovereign and that it is his prerogative not to reveal himself.

Now, all God has to do with fallen sinners to hide himself is just simply not to reveal himself to them. You see, he is hidden from fallen sinners because of the depravity of their heart. If God left it up to them, they would never seek him even with all the commands of Scripture to seek him. Those are commands, not invitations, yet unless the Lord himself is pleased to reveal himself in sinners, they would never even know where to begin seeking him. They would create a god and do create a god in their own imagination and seek after that god, an idol god, but they would never seek the true and living God. Our Lord Jesus Christ made this very plain in Matthew 11:25. You talk about a hardened generation, he came unto his own and his own received him not. When he came into Israel, the nation of Israel, he was the fulfillment of all of the Old Testament Scriptures and prophecies and types and promises and he declared himself so but they turned thumbs down on him. In fact, they declared him a blasphemer and for that reason crucified him. They would have nothing to do with him and yet here stood the very Prince of Glory in their presence and yet they were blinded. In the face of that hardness, our Lord Jesus Christ did not become a beggar.

He did not try to plead with these, rather he pronounced judgment on them. In fact, in Matthew 11, he said it would be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for the nation of Israel. Now, unless you're a Jew, you may not really appreciate the strength of that condemnation. Tyre and Sidon were cities outside of Israel. They were north of Israel. They were in the territory of the enemies of Israel and so the Lord is saying it would be more tolerable for Israel's enemies in the day of judgment than for them because of their hardness. In fact, he goes one step further where he declares Capernaum that was lifted up in pride would be brought down to hell. You say, "What's so important Capernaum?" Well, that was a place where our Lord Jesus Christ had been raised and where he had ministered for many years and done miracles and yet they did not believe upon him. They were left to their own reprobate minds.

And the Lord said it would be more tolerable in the day of judgment for the city of Sodom. You think about sodomy, Sodom, what that represented and yet the Lord said it would be more tolerable for such a city than for one of these cities of Israel that prided itself in being righteous, prided itself in a goodly heritage and yet was lost.

So what was our Lord's conclusion? Matthew 11:25 we read, "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid," there is the word that we're looking at, "thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight." So that's the simple answer as to why God would hide himself. He does not owe salvation to anyone. He is a sovereign God and he exercises his will as he will, revealing Christ in whom he will.

I know this is not a popular message and it certainly isn't one that you're hearing being preached today in many places and yet, nonetheless, it is the word of God. What I'm doing is showing you some Scriptures for your consideration to weigh prayerfully. In Job 33, Job himself acknowledged this. You think about Job, how the Lord took his hand off of him for a season and Satan was allowed to try him right on down to the very breath of his life and had it not been for God himself restraining Satan, Satan would have most certainly have killed Job and carried him into condemnation but God would not have it. You see, even Satan himself is God's creature and he cannot so much as raise a finger but what God ordains it and so even though for a season God hid himself even from Job, withdrew his presence, so to speak, it seemed so anyway to Job, yet God's hand never was actually off of Job the whole time. But in Job 33:13 we read, "Why dost thou strive against him? for he giveth not account of any of his matters."

So we could pretty much close the message even with that answer as to why God would hide himself or what kind of God would hide himself. He is sovereign and yet in my text, Isaiah 45:15, it says that he is the Savior. Isaiah 45:15, "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself," that's his prerogative, "O God of Israel, the Saviour." Now, the original word for "Savior" there is "yasha" from which we get the word "Joshua" and in the original Greek, it's the name "Jesus." You may know well the verse, Matthew 1:21, "thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."

So we see here that God in his sovereignty, on the one hand it is his prerogative to hide himself from sinners, and it says in Matthew 11:25, he hides himself from the wise and the prudent. Those are those that are wise in their own eyes, that think themselves somebody but they're not and yet to reveal himself unto babes. You stop and think about what a babe is, when born into this world, a baby needs full attention. That baby can do nothing for himself but requires someone else that is responsible to take care of him or her until such time as they are brought to adulthood. So such is our need. If God were to leave us to ourselves, even in bringing us into spiritual life and then leaving us, it would be like leaving a baby out on the sidewalk exposed to nature and the world. How long could that baby live? No, God in being the Savior not only determines who it is he will save but gives life that the sinner might know Christ and then nurtures that life all the way throughout that saved sinner's life.

So that's the sense of the word "Savior" here. Yes, it is God's prerogative in his sovereignty to hide himself from whom he will but, at the same time, to reveal himself to whom he will and therein is the word "Savior." "Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people," not attempt to save but save and that's what the Lord Jesus did in coming into this world. He came to work out a righteousness that no sinner could ever work out to the satisfaction of a holy God. That's just how holy God is. In fact, the Scriptures declare that even our best righteousnesses are as filthy rags before him. Paul, in writing about who he was before it pleased God to reveal Christ in him, he thought himself blameless and yet God, when he was pleased by his Spirit to reveal Christ in him and show him he was one of those sinners for whom Christ had paid the debt and that God had imputed that righteousness to his account, he considered everything else up to that point as dung.

So this is a God who hides himself. A sovereign God and yet a loving and merciful God because he does, for those that he has purposed to save, in time reveal himself. The hiding is but for a season. Now, in the same book of Isaiah and I love the book of Isaiah; it is so full of the Gospel. It is the Gospel. But in Isaiah 54:7-8, the Lord declares, "For a small moment have I forsaken thee," that's the sense of hiding, a withdrawing of your presence, "but with great mercies will I gather thee." Then verse 8 declares, "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD," and notice, "thy Redeemer." Do you see the parallel with Isaiah 45:15, my text? "Thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Savior." Here he repeats again in this portion in Isaiah 54, "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer." It's just to say that those that Christ has redeemed by his own precious blood, he will not lose one.

So you might say to yourself, "Well, why would God hide himself even for a moment from those that he has redeemed?" You might say, "I understand perhaps in his justice hiding himself from fallen sinners that he has never purposed to save and such is their lot. They deserve that condemnation, but why would he hid himself from those that he has saved and that Christ has redeemed?" Well, again, if I may come back to the illustration of the game of hide-n-seek, and I hate to use that word "game" but I believe you'll understand, the purpose of hiding is to be sought. Now, I know as kids we used to like to pull a prank on the person hiding themselves and they would all go and hide or the kid would go and hide and then when we would say it was time to seek, we would go off quietly somewhere and start playing and doing something else and just leave those that were hidden hidden and eventually they would start poking their heads out wondering, "Well, how come no one is seeking after me?" That certainly is not why God would hide himself. No, when God hides himself from those that he has saved, remember now, he never withdraws his Spirit but there are times when he might be pleased to withhold his presence, in other words, not necessarily pour out his blessing upon us in a way that we think or might think that he should, and the purpose is that we might seek after him.

This for specific seasons and particular reasons, God might in mercy hide himself. You say, "What would be those reasons?" Well, I can think of three as I consider the Scriptures and there are probably more but for time's sake, I'll dwell on these three. The first is that when he hides himself, it does create longing after him. You may have read in the book of Song of Solomon and for some it is a book of deep mystery, but I see in it a picture of how Christ loves his church and it is in the form of an allegory of the king and one upon whom he set his affection; one who was undeserving who considered herself to be nothing among all the daughters of Jerusalem and yet the king was pleased to set his affection upon her.

But we read here in chapter 3 and verse 3 at a particular time when the king withdrew himself and suddenly the one who was the object of that king's attention realized that he was not with her and so in verse 1 we read of Song of Solomon 3, "By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not." So we read, "I will

rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not. The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" So if God is pleased to hide himself, it's a mercy and a kindness in this: that we not take his presence for granted. You see, in our depravity that's what we would do and so his purpose in hiding himself is simply to create in those that he loves, in whom he has redeemed and given his Spirit, create in them that longing after him. Much like you would withhold water for a time from someone in order to create thirst and once you see that thirst you know that there is life.

But secondly, God may be pleased, again for specific seasons and just like we have winter, spring, summer and fall, we have seasons of grace. We have seasons of mercy. God grants his graces in measure according to what he has purposed and just like the dryness of the summer and the heat of the summer causes us to long for the coolness of the fall and the deadness of winter causes us to look forward to the beauty of the spring, so when God is pleased to hide himself, it's to create that longing after him but, secondly, to see our need of him. Withdrawing of that comfort and warmth, much like the sun that causes then plants to droop, yet when the sun is given again with measure, the light is shone, then the plants revive. You see, the root is still there. The root is never taken away. In this matter of salvation, the root is the Lord Jesus Christ. It's his blood and righteousness that are our sustenance and yet when we're talking about our experience, there may be times in which the Lord be pleased to withhold his hand of mercy and his presence for a season and that to cause us to see our need of him.

But thirdly, I would say how God shows his mercy and love and kindness in hiding himself for a moment from his people, it is certainly to bring forth that fruit in its season. You see, God ordains our seasons. I know men complain about it but there is not one mistake with God. Everything is exactly the way it should be, whether it's the heat of the day or whether it's a storm. God has his way in the wind and the storm, it says in the book of Nahum 1:3.

So what is some of the fruit that comes forth when God is pleased to hide himself for a season from one of his own? I've listed seven here so obviously I cannot develop these fully but let me go through them and I pray that this would be a seed that the Lord would take and sow even in your own mind and heart and cause you to consider who he is. But the very first fruit of God hiding himself for a season in mercy and love toward one of his own is that, as we've seen already, it teaches us of his sovereignty. It reminds us of who is in charge. We're not our own. If we've been bought with a price, then we belong unto the Lord and shall he not do with his own what he will?

So that's the first lesson that we can learn from God hiding himself for a season in mercy but, secondly, I would say there's the fruit of rooting our soul in humility. How we would be lifted up in pride and arrogance in the blessings that the Lord gives because of his grace and mercy, because of Christ, we would tend to consider those to be our right. So the Lord hiding himself, withholding his hand of mercy, it causes the soul that has been

made alive by the Spirit of God not to be lifted up in pride but to be humbled. So that's the fruit. It roots the soul in humility.

Thirdly, it does reprove that pride in presumption. You see, we need to be humbled and pride and presumption is to somehow take what God has given and to give ourselves the glory for it. There is nothing in us that is good that we have originated. No, anything that could be said to be good, it is of God. The very word "good" is the word "God." In other words, but for his grace we would be and continue to be the most abominable, wretched devils that ever existed. So the fruit is to reprove the pride and presumption that is part of our sinful heart and nature but for God withholding his hand.

Fourthly, it's a way for God to chasten worldly-mindedness. Now, I hear some boasting that somehow they've been delivered from worldly-mindedness but I am here to tell you, after all these years since the Lord has been pleased to open my heart and teach me of his grace and mercy in Christ, I continue in this flesh to be worldly-minded and so do you. It's only a liar who would say otherwise. No, part of our nature is this worldly-mindedness. "Prone to wander, Lord I feel it. Prone to leave the one I love." We become attached to this world, to the comforts of it, whether it be our family; whether it be our job security; whether it be our bank accounts. All of these things, sometimes even the fellowship of the body that meets together for worship, you become attached to different people and what the Lord has to do is bring in a fire of trial and that burns up the chaff, the hay, the stubble, and proves that which is truly precious metal: the gold, the silver, the precious stones. All of these things, the Lord ordains lest we should ever put our confidence in this world or in this flesh. Yes, our nature is to be worldly-minded so when God hides himself, it is a mercy because that longing after him gets our mind and attention off of this world.

Fifthly, it causes great searching of the heart and how we need that heart exercised. Many times we're looking for a reason outside of ourselves for why God does what he does and yet when he withholds his presence, even as the psalmist said in Psalm 139:23, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." How we need these heart searchings and so sometimes God in hiding himself, you lay there awake at night, your mind spinning and turning and there is fretfulness; there may be fear; there might even be a sense of guilt, unbelief. All of these things is like someone taking a stick and just churning a pot and all of the dirt coming to the surface. The Lord purposes these things that we might know our heart but moreso know our heart's need, that apart from the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ alone we have no hope.

That leads then to the sixth reason that I see and that is that it exposes the sinfulness of sin. Lest we ever think that somehow we have outgrown sin as some preach progressive sanctification, that somehow the heart becomes less and less sinful, for the Lord's children, such is not their thought. If they ever begin to think that way, God in mercy hiding himself, exposes the sinfulness of their sin. That's why the Lord taught his disciples to pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil." That's something that we never cease to ask of the Lord.

Then, number seven, the reason is that it does call forth earnest longing and I would say even restless seeking and fervent prayers after the Lord. We would not even pray were it not that he withholds for a season his presence, hides himself just like water, go for a while without water and pretty soon it develops that thirst. That's what the Lord is pleased to do. In Psalm 42, the psalmist said in verse 1, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?"

What it brings us to, dear friend, is that I cannot live without him. Can you? One writer said, "His presence is heaven but his absence is hell."

"Oh, how boundless is our Father's grace,  
In height and depth and length.  
He made his Son our righteousness,  
His Spirit is our strength.

"What though I mourn, a hiding God,  
His faithfulness I trust.  
His word, his love can never fail,  
The Lord I serve is just."

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