

Called to go Deeper

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As a young teenager I often spent hours on a crisp winter's evening gazing up at the starry skies allowing my imagination to roam the galaxies seeking to visualise the invisible.

Today, as an adult my fascination with deep unexplored space remains as sharp as ever. It's hidden mysteries speak of the deep things of God.

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
(Psalm 19:1)

God's self-introduction in Genesis captivates those like me who earnestly want to know the deep things of God. 'In the beginning God'; is without explanation for the agnostic, without apology to the atheist, it introduces all men to the deep mystery of God.

Those early verses of Genesis depicting the emptiness, chaos, darkness, swirling waters, all without explanation, introduce us to a deep mystery, yet hope of change lying in the phrase 'the Spirit of the Lord was hovering over the waters'.

Suddenly you are introduced to a dynamic movement of the Spirit in response to God's word, 'let there be light' and the interaction of word and Spirit in power immediately produced light. The beginning of restoration of order proceeded from this divine initiative and we are introduced to the deep things of God. Some of the greatest figures in history have been men and women of depth of character – thinking, fellowship, commitment, prayer, life in the Spirit, submission. As a consequence they experienced some of the deepest spiritual encounters with God of all time.

In choosing Abram to be the father of the faithful God was signalling that it would be through his seed all nations and families of the earth would be touched by God's grace. To have such a privilege, to be used in such a way was not held out as a prospect to the shallow or the mediocre, but to a man or woman who could enter into a deep covenant relationship. It was God who made this privilege and promise of world blessing a covenant issue.

God introduced Abram to the covenant He was to make between them in a deep, dark, mysterious experience. After Abraham had protected the altar from vultures descending from the air, (symbolic here as later seen from Jeremiah; symbolic of an assault by demonic forces intent on disrupting this covenant), Abraham fell into a deep sleep. While in this sleep it says that a 'horror and great darkness fell upon him'. Abraham alert to his encounter with God, was made aware that surrounding God and the covenant is a thick deep darkness that although not touching him was

filled with foreboding and evil. Whatever our experience, (as long as God is in it with us), we have nothing to fear however dark our situation appears to be, however deep the sense of horror. The Lord, who holds our hand, walks us securely through it. God spoke to Abraham not in the cloistered security of a religious setting, but in the depth of horror and darkness assuring him that although his descendants through unbelief would be taken and held captive for 400 years, they would return to their land a free people to worship and follow their God. God was committing himself to his promise through a covenant with Abraham.

Following God's assurance we then have the revelation of God walking through the darkness separating the two halves of the sacrifice on the altar like a burning torch and a smoking oven. God was saying that what was happening was being affirmed and sealed by none greater than He himself.

Our mind is propelled forward by the Spirit to the deep spiritual encounter of Jesus in Gethsemane where, having left the upper room he swiftly moves ahead of his disciples and appears before them 'horror stricken'. Not one of them had seen him this way before. I cannot even begin to convey the picture adequately. They had always seen him as the man anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows; a man whose face showed serenity and peace in the midst of some of the most frightening circumstances surrounding him such as the crowds wanting to throw him over the cliffs at Nazareth, or the tumultuous waves of the Lake in turmoil.

Never had his disciples seen him horror stricken until now. Something was coming upon Jesus that had never come on him before. As he entered the garden of Gethsemane and went ahead of his disciples urging them to pray for him, he moved into a deep personal experience with the Father over embracing the cup and drinking its dregs. For Christ having looked in the cup had seen its contents: the vileness of the sin it contained, the corruptions of the soul of man, the disease that afflicted the human body, the demonic assaults and pressures that had oppressed the minds of men, and now he, never having once experienced sin in his life, sickness in his body or torment in his mind, is being asked to drink such a cup as he takes our place in the judgement of God. Is it any wonder that on the first two occasions he recoiled yet returned in the commitment of his saviourhood to embrace that cup? The darkness of the night was as light compared to the darkness that pressed his soul in that hour in the garden.

It is only those who have encountered God in the deepest issues of life that are positioned through their experiences to help those going through the deep waters of human experience.

'Deep calls to deep', said the teacher. If you have experienced the deep waters of God's revelation, there is nothing or no one that can capture your heart again. There is a continual pull on your spirit towards God. You are not with those who meander through life; you are engaged in a purposeful journey. You do not live in the shallows of human friendships with casual acquaintances with whom you share one or two meetings a week, but rather the depth of God's heart calls to you by the Spirit and you respond with a cry from your own. You long to draw, and live, close

to God. This impacts all else you do in life. It is not that you are dour or sour, but you are sober and diligent. You don't trifle with the things of God and hold just enough spirituality to assuage your conscience and persuade yourself that you are in the kingdom. But men and women of depth live in an abundant entry to the kingdom. You do not need constant reminding of your relationship with God. You enjoy covenant life with him. You are not phased that your name and face is not displayed on the notice boards or magazines that pepper Christianity. You are into deeper things: the engaging of God's heart in worship, of God's mind in wisdom and direction, God's will in passion and prayer, and of God's power through his Spirit. You know you need to keep close and walk ever more deeply in the things of God because you are surrounded by an age described as being in the lap of the evil one where an apostate religion has too readily aligned itself with the deep things of Satan.

The friendship that God enjoys with his friends is so fulfilling to God himself that he cannot conceive of acting independent of them and so he said:

*"Shall I not share this with my **friend** Abraham?
Shall I not share this with my prophets?"*

Deep fellowship with God is held out as a prospect to all believers. Jesus speaking to his disciples before he left said:

*"No more servants but **friends**."*

That privilege through the blood of Christ is open to all that have come into him. Today, deep is calling to deep - respond accordingly. Draw me and I will run after you.