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Does God go on Vacation?

That may sound like a strange, ridiculous, even irreverent question.

But many people ask it, not usually in those exact words.

“God, where are You?”

“God, what are You doing?”

“God, why are You so far away?”

“God, why didn’t You, why don’t you stop that?”



King David asked that as he opened Psalm 13.

“How long, LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me?”

We’ve been there. Sometimes it is when people don’t understand, ignore or mistreat us, and it goes on and on despite our efforts and cries to God. At other times it is when circumstances plague us, wear us down and out as they continue without relief.

We wonder, ask, “God, do You really know about this? Are You looking the other way? Are you ignoring me?” “God, are You on vacation?”

As we look back to David, we don’t know when he wrote these words, or what his specific circumstances were. We do know he was in distress, that God seemed distant, unreachable. Four times in the first two verses he asks God, “How long?” He tells us it was a time when an enemy was exalted over him.

In distress, feeling anxious and full of grief, he clings to God, to the truth about God that he knows. He closes the Psalm,

“But I have trusted in Your faithfulness; my heart shall rejoice in Your salvation.
I will sing to the LORD, because He has looked after me.”

Just a few Psalms earlier David rejoiced in God’s justice and declared that God “does not forget the cry of the needy” (9:12).

David was like us. He knew that God never forgets His children, He never ignores them, He does not go on vacation, He never will leave or forsake them. But sometimes in the long, trying times it seemed like He does.

So what was David to do? What are we to do? The closing verses of Psalm 13, again, tell us,

“But I have trusted in Your faithfulness; my heart shall rejoice in Your salvation.
I will sing to the LORD, because He has looked after me.”

David made the choice to trust God and his faithfulness. He chose to focus on what God is like and what He had given him — most importantly, salvation. He chose to praise God for His care “because God has looked after me” (6).

He was not the first to do this. We remember Job. Job lost his property, wealth, children and his health as God allowed Satan to test him. In the midst of that terrible, unimaginable suffering we read,

“Now when Job’s three friends heard about all this adversity that had come upon him, they came, each one from his own place — Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite; and they made an appointment together to come to sympathize with him and comfort him” (Job 2:11).

We know they did not provide comfort, but poked at him, and accused him of being sinful. Instead of sympathizing with him, comforting him, they, as Job said,

“smear me with lies; you are all worthless physicians. Oh that you would be completely silent, and that it would become your wisdom!” (13:4-5).

In spite all of this, Job declared to his three friends, “Though [God] slay me, I will hope in Him” (13:15).

Job, David, and so many of God’s people down through history have clung to God, stayed firm in faith and hope in the darkest nights, including those when it seems like God is silent, inactive, on vacation. Yes, as the writer of Psalm 121 declares,

“I will raise my eyes to the mountains; from where will my help come? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth. He will not allow your foot to slip; He who watches over you will not slumber. Behold, He who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep” (1-4).

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