

## Is God Interested in What Happens to Me?

*Exodus 2:23-25*

**L**oneliness. Heartache. Bereavement. Confusion. Bondage. Tragedy. Crisis. Bad health. Unemployment. Misunderstandings. An impossible situation. A stagnant prayer life. A feeling of being bogged down.

The chances are very likely that if you are a human being, you've experienced each of these at one time or another. You may be going through one of them right now. The difficulties in your life may have forced you to the point where you dread getting out of bed in the morning, or going to work. You may be afraid to answer the phone or open your mail box, fearful of the possibility of more bad news, or another crisis you just can't handle.

You come to church services, but you are unable to concentrate on worshipping God because your problems and concerns loom so large. You stand with the rest of the congregation and sing hymns such as "It is Well with My Soul," or "I've Got Peace Like a River." You read the comforting passages of Scripture. You hear a few words of a sermon. But in the end you go home, back to your heartache and loneliness and impossibilities, and in your hurt you cry out to God: "God, do you really care about me? Are you really interested in what happens to me?"

In our Scripture passage for today, one can see every one of those problems and more. As slaves in Egypt, the Hebrews knew bondage. They knew loneliness and heartache. They knew bad health and crises and impossible situations of all kinds. They, too, dreaded to face another day. And they, too, cried out in their anguish to God.

And in these few little verses, we see truths so beautiful and so overwhelming that you can fully believe them only if you have personally experienced them. These truths tell us about God, and they tell us that yes! God really does care about what happens to us. And just as God responded to the cries and groanings of the Hebrew people in Egypt, the loving, compassionate Heavenly Father responds to the deepest needs of our hearts today. How does He do that?

### **1** God hears, v. 24

We read in verse 23, "*The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God.*" In verse 24, we see the first response God makes to His children when they cry out to

Him: “*God heard their groaning....*” These people were slaves, and their lives were far from being easy and comfortable. It isn’t really clear whether these cries were actually prayers that the people were offering up to God, or whether these were cries of anguish—probably both—but God heard them. The original Hebrew language tells us something beautiful about how much God really cares: God was doing more than merely “hearing”; He was “paying attention” to their cries. That’s what the word “heard” really means here, and it conjures up in our minds the picture of God dropping everything else He’s doing to listen, to pay attention to the cries of His children.

Have you ever felt as Job did? “*For sighing comes to me instead of food; my groans pour out like water. What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to me. I have no peace, no quietness; I have no rest, but only turmoil.*” (3:24-26) Or Jeremiah? “*My groans are many and my heart is faint.*” Or have you ever done what David did? “*I pour out my complaint before him; before him I tell my trouble.*”

Then listen to the precious words of the Scriptures: “*Know that the Lord has set apart the godly for himself; the Lord will hear when I call to him*” (Psalm 4:3). “*In my distress I called to the Lord; I cried to my God for help. From his temple he heard my voice; my cry came before him, into his ears*” (Psalm 18:6). “*The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles*” (Psalm 34:17). “*The Lord is far from the wicked but he hears the prayer of the righteous*” (Proverbs 15:29).

Those are beautiful words, but they are more than just beautiful. They are nothing but the truth! God hears! God pays attention to my griefs and my loneliness and my heartaches! God pays attention and knows the problem before I am even sure of it myself.

Sometimes we have trouble believing that, though. When everything is going just fine in our lives, it’s easy to believe that God cares and that God hears. But when our world caves in, our faith in God is tested and stretched to the breaking point. It’s not as easy to believe that God pays attention *then*. But listen to what Marvin Drake wrote in “*The Catholic Digest*”: “*If radio’s slim fingers can pluck a melody from out of the night and toss it over mountains and the sea; if the petal-white notes from a violin are blown across the desert and the city’s din; if songs, like crimson roses, are caught from thin blue air—why should mortals wonder if God answers prayer?*”

Why, indeed? It may be because we have the attitude about prayer and the way God answers prayer that was illustrated in a comic strip. A little girl sat in her high chair, her head bowed, her hands folded, an angelic expression on her sweet face, a bowl sitting on the tray before her. She prays “Abba Dabba Ahmin!” She tastes her food, and puts her spoon down before saying once more “Abba Dabba AHMIN!” When she tastes her food the second time, she sticks out her tongue and says, “STILL tastes like mush!”

Friends, we have a God who pays attention, but He doesn’t change mush into steak to satisfy our whims and desires. If it fit into His eternal plan, I’m sure God would and could change mush into steak or anything else He wanted. And sometimes what you and I ask for and expect in our prayers and groanings before God sounds just as childish. We act like we think God has nothing better to do than to sit on His great white throne and change F grades into A grades on our tests at school, or bad decisions into good ones, or to wave a magic wand and make everything sail smoothly in our day to day lives.

Who knows what kind of miracles God may be preparing you for? Who knows what benefits your life will receive because you are walking through the darkness right now? Who knows what compassion you will learn for others because you are hurting? God doesn’t cause all pain and grief, but you and I as children of the King can know that God hears! We worship and serve a God who pays attention!

## **2** God remembers, v. 24

The very next thing we see about how God responds to the cries of His people is found in verse 24: “*He remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob.*” This covenant that God had made with Abraham, and had validated with Isaac and Jacob, was the very touchstone of the people of Israel. Everything in their lives revolved around the covenant of faithfulness God had made with them. And all through the Old Testament, we see the concept of the relationship between God and His people. The emphasis was that regardless of Israel’s faithfulness or lack of it, God was always faithful. The key idea here in this verse and throughout the Scriptures is that God is dependable. You can count on God to be faithful!

And when we read in verse 24 that God remembered His covenant, it simply means that God knew the time was right for the fulfillment of the covenant. It was time for God to act on behalf of His people to give them what He had promised to give them.

How nice it is to be remembered! When you meet someone you haven't seen for years, how good it is to hear that person call your name, as if he had only seen you yesterday. When you have a birthday, it always feels good to have loved ones remember you on that special day. You may be like the woman who wrote this little poem, *"A husband is the kind of man who drives me to a rage: he can't recall my birthday, but always knows my age."* Well, we like to be remembered about most things, anyway.

Especially when we are hurting. Especially when we are lonely. Especially when we are burdened, and the weight of our burden nearly breaks us. Especially when we feel that no one cares, that "nobody knows the trouble" we've seen. That is when we have the promise from God that He really does care about what happens to us; He really is interested in our lives. He really does **remember**. He really is dependable!

And there is nothing that happens to any of God's children that goes unnoticed by God. The Scriptures remind us that when Noah, his family and all the animals had been floating in that ark for 150 days, that *"God remembered Noah...."* (Genesis 8:1). When God sent the angels to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah and the other cities in the valley, we are told that God remembered Abraham and his prayer to save Lot (Genesis 19:29). But listen to this: *"But Zion said, 'The Lord has forsaken me, the Lord has forgotten me.' 'Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are ever before me'"* (Isaiah 49:14-16).

God remembers! We are engraved on the palms of the hands of God. Even though we read in the papers of mothers who have tossed their infant children out in boxes in a parking lot, or in dumpsters, even though it is possible for a mother to forget her newborn baby, God says that He will never forget us. God is dependable.

### **3** God sees, v. 25

*"So God looked on the Israelites...."* God heard their cries and God remembered the promise He had given to them. And God took notice. The word "heard" meant more than just hearing; the word "saw" means more than just looking. The Hebrew word here means that God was experiencing the hurts and griefs of His people. In several places in the Old Testament we see that the words "saw" or "see" are synonymous with experiencing something. When the Psalms speak of seeing death, the meaning is that of experiencing death. When the people spoke up to Jeremiah and said, "We will never see the sword of famine,"

they meant that they would never experience death by the sword or by famine. When God saw the people of Israel, not only did God notice them, but He was going through their hurts and problems with them. Those griefs were His griefs, too. God was carefully examining the situation, totally understanding what was happening.

Hagar, fleeing from Sarai, was stopped by God and told to return to her mistress. She said, *“You are the God who sees me”* (Genesis 16:13). I heard someone paraphrase this once like this: “God loves you so much He can’t take His eyes off you.” God is vitally interested, and loves each of us so much, that He can’t move His Eternal Eyes away from us!

Julia Ward Howe wrote *“The Battle Hymn of the Republic.”* One day she was talking to Charles Sumner, who was serving as Senator from Massachusetts. She asked him to become involved in the case of a person who needed help from someone influential. The Senator answered, “Julia, I’ve become so busy that I can no longer concern myself with individuals.” Mrs. Howe replied, “Charles, that is quite remarkable. Even God hasn’t reached that stage yet.”

Today, we can praise His name that He hasn’t. We worship a God who sees! He is not blind, that He does not notice the troubles we face, the heartaches we endure, the griefs we bear. He is not ignorant of the tragedies we suffer. You can know from Scripture as well as from personal experience that God sees!

## **4** God knows, v. 25

The remainder of verse 25 tells us that God *“was concerned about them.”* That is the way the NIV reads, but I don’t particularly care for the way this verse is translated there. The KJV says, *“God had respect unto them,”* and I don’t like that one, either. The NAS reads, *“God took notice of them,”* which comes closer to the original than the others, in my opinion. I believe the words used in this verse indicate that God “knew” what was going on in their lives. He was completely aware of their situation.

Here is what I base this on. The word used here is also used in the opening chapters of Genesis, where we read in the KJV that Adam “knew” Eve, his wife. The word for “to know” means to experience something on an intimate basis. Adam and Eve shared in a personal, sexual, intimate relationship. They gave all they had to each other. And I firmly believe that whenever we read that God “knows” us, that that means God is personally involved with us on an intensely

intimate basis. It's not sexual, of course, but God gives us all there is of Him. He holds nothing back. He knows us.

God hears, God remembers, God sees—but at the crowning point of our relationship with God is that eternal fact that God knows. He knows my trouble; He knows my heartache; He knows the reason for my restlessness; He knows my name. He knows everything about me. He knows—and understands—things about me that I don't even know or understand about myself!

When the Bible tells us that God knew what the people of Israel were experiencing there in Egypt, that means He knew because He was experiencing it with them. He didn't know it because one of His top angels reported the conditions to Him. He knew it because He was intimately involved with His people. He had entered into their worlds, to share their suffering.

And that is exactly what God does for His people today. There is nothing that happens to any of us that God is not aware of, or that God is not personally involved in. We are told in 1 Peter 5:7 to *“Cast all your anxieties, all your cares, on Him, for He cares about you.”* And wonder of wonders! He **does** care! He knows and He cares!

That is what Jesus was trying to teach His disciples. *“Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows”* (Luke 12:6-7). And one of the most assuring verses in the Psalms is found in Ps 115:12a—*“The Lord remembers us and will bless us.”*

The Lord knows us! And no matter what your personal Egypt looks like, no matter where it is or how long you've been there, God knows your circumstances, and even though the circumstances and the apparent silences of God may say to you that God **doesn't** care, rest assured that God knows, that God is mindful of you, that even now He is working actively on your behalf to guide you through your personal wilderness into all the riches of a spiritual Promised Land.

*“God heard... God remembered... God saw... God knew.”* That is how God responded to His people then, and that is how He responds to His people **now**.

The challenge on this day is to ask you: Won't you commit and surrender yourself to a God who pays attention, who is dependable, who loves you so much He can't take His eyes off you, and who is intimately involved in your life?