

# Ever Present

By Steve Hearts

During the especially trying moments of life, when the road ahead is foggy and unclear, when we find ourselves in painful or simply undesirable circumstances, God's presence can often be obscure and even downright invisible. In such times, it's easy to think that He has abandoned us and left us to fend for ourselves.



Such was my frame of mind when I lay down to sleep one night. I was going through a time of emotional upheaval as a result of major change taking place in my life. My heart and soul were engulfed in a thick, oppressive fog that refused to lift—not to mention the struggle that often comes with the type of change I was facing, which involved letting go. I felt as though God had left me out in the cold to deal with this crisis alone.

In an effort to find relief, I had set up my laptop to play some Psalms on audio. I was about to turn off the audio and shut down the laptop when I heard the first lines of Psalm 46, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”<sup>1</sup> What happened next will take a moment for me to adequately describe, but it took place in a matter of seconds. It was a brief but clear exchange between the Lord and me. I mentally communicated my feelings to Him, and His answer was clearly heard in my mind.

“You? A very present help in trouble?” my mind challenged in frustration. “Here I am struggling to survive this painful situation, and Your ‘presence’ is nowhere to be seen. You’ve deserted me and left me to fend for myself.”

The Lord’s voice gently sounded in my thoughts, without the slightest hint of frustration or anger, “You are mistakenly thinking that the phrase ‘very present’ means ‘very noticeable,’ when in reality these two phrases hold no resemblance whatsoever. Just because My presence is not noticed or felt by you, or My voice seems silent, that does not mean I’m not by your side.”

He then drove this point home with a question: “Just because passengers on an airplane are unable to see the pilot, does that lessen the reality of his presence any?”

I had traveled by plane more than enough to be certain that the answer was an unequivocal no. The cockpit is always securely shut and locked, thus the pilot remains invisible to the passengers. He communicates with them through the intercom, keeping them informed of takeoffs, landings, weather conditions, the progress of their journey, the estimated time of arrival, etc.

The Lord then asked me, “In all the times you’ve traveled by plane, are you able to recall one instance in which you, or any of your fellow passengers, doubted the presence of the pilot aboard the aircraft just because he was invisible?”

“No,” I answered again.

“Then,” He continued, “Why should you doubt My presence in your life even though you can’t always notice it?”

Once more, God’s simple, loving, and gentle wisdom won over my attempts to challenge Him and prove myself wiser than He. The oppressive fog lifted as I opened my heart to the knowledge that He is indeed

present with me, regardless of what circumstances or other voices may tell me. He, in His love, has given me the ability to connect with Him and hear His voice in my heart at any time. He is constantly speaking to me, just as a pilot speaks to his passengers over the intercom. I have no reason whatsoever to doubt His presence, even for a moment.

I realized that I needed to be like Moses who, as Paul says, “endured as seeing Him who is invisible.”<sup>2</sup> I thought of how Jesus’ followers must have felt after He first told them He was going back to Heaven. Since they had become accustomed to His physical presence, they must have felt like He was abandoning them and leaving them high and dry. But not only did He promise to send them the Comforter—the Holy Spirit—The Lord also promised them, “I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”<sup>3</sup> It didn’t matter that they could no longer see or sense His physical presence with them.

He is no less present with me today, or any of us, for that matter. I just have to have faith and believe, regardless of whether I notice Him near me or not. Why else would Paul the Apostle have referred to faith as “the evidence of things not seen?”<sup>4</sup>

I thought of the three Hebrew children in the book of Daniel who refused to indulge in idol worship, even though they knew full well that this would place their lives on the line. God could have somehow miraculously delivered them from having to go through the fire in the first place, and I’m sure they were hoping He would. But even when no immediate deliverance was seen on the horizon, and the furnace was heated seven times hotter and they were thrown right in, they didn’t chide God for having abandoned them. Rather, they trusted that regardless of the way things might have seemed, He was indeed present with them, and would continue to be, even in the face of death itself. Only then was their faith rewarded, and God’s presence became visible, not only to them, but to their persecutors as well. And they walked out of the flames unharmed.<sup>5</sup>

I was finally able to truly rest in the Lord’s arms that night, no longer doubting His presence. I may not always sense or notice His presence, but He is with me just the same.

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 46:1 KJV.

<sup>2</sup> Hebrews 11:27 KJV.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 28:20 KJV.

<sup>4</sup> Hebrews 11:1 KJV.

<sup>5</sup> See Daniel 3.