



## Psalm 39—When God Disappoints You

I wonder sometimes if God knows what he is doing or not doing, at least one part of me does, but unlike the psalmist who held his tongue, I'm not quite so reticent. This man was in dire straits. Whatever his illness may have been, it was grave. His hold on life grew more tenuous by the day, but rather than giving vent to his inner turmoil, he kept it bottled up. In part, he explains, it was to protect God from the criticism of the skeptical who denied God's goodness and justice. *I said, 'I will guard my ways that I may not sin with my tongue; I will keep a muzzle on my mouth as long as the wicked are in my presence.'* If he, a just and good man, suffered in this way, what did that say about God? He did not want to provide them with more fodder for their criticism of God. His silence, though, only magnified his suffering. *I was silent and still; I held my peace to no avail; my distress grew worse, my heart became hot within me. While I mused the fire burned.* The flames of his anger, hurt, and disappointment grew more intense by the day. They were consuming him. When he could no longer keep it to himself, he pled with God: *Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear to my cry; do not hold your peace at my tears.* Just a little more time was his prayer. *I am your passing guest, an alien, like all my forebears. Turn your gaze from me, that I may smile again, before I depart and am no more.*

There are two things that come out of this psalmist's experience that are helpful to me. The first is that there is nothing we cannot take to God in prayer. If you feel God has let you down, tell him. The longer you keep the disappointment, the question, the sense of injustice within you, the more it festers and the more destructive it becomes. God knows what is in your heart anyway. Sometimes, too, just verbalizing the disappointment or the anger, helps put things into perspective. The second helpful thing that may be drawn from the psalmist's unfortunate experience is that whether death comes to us as a welcomed guest or as an unwelcomed intruder, we are anything but "passing guests" or "aliens." We are God's own children and "neither life nor death . . . nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

God knows our needs from within and may be trusted to give us grace to sustain us in our daily walk, as well as hold us in his eternal embrace.