

But Psalms, it's so simple but to the point, and there's so much in that small, simple Psalm.

So much.

And when you're in a hurting position, when you're in a hurting situation, and we've all had situations in our life where, like David, they were really difficult.

And so we've all had those times.

And so we can relate to these Psalms the way David did.

And I believe that was God's intent.

David related to them, but also it's timeless.

We can relate to the Psalms.

Look at Psalms 13 in your scripture.

How long, O Lord, will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me?

How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart all the day?

How long will my enemy be exalted over me?

Consider and answer me, O Lord, my God.

Enlighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death.

lest my enemies say I have overcome him, lest my adversaries rejoice when I have fallen.

But, verse 5, but, and this is the part that I like the most, but I have trusted in thy loving kindness.

My heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.

I will sing to the Lord because he has dealt bountifully with me.

And that song, the verse in that song said, I trust in my God, my Savior, the one who never fails.

Okay, well, one who never fails, why did David say some of these things he did at the very beginning?

Why have you forsaken me?

Well, we'll talk about that.

Have you ever had a time in your life where you felt like God had left you?

I like to ask reflective questions, and I'd never mind if somebody raised their hand, but this time I don't think you'll raise your hand, but has there ever been anybody who has not had a time when you felt that God has turned his face from you or abandoned you?

See, I don't think anybody has.

I have too many notes.

I have to figure out how to set this up.

Today, this psalm is in the context in scripture of tragedy and sickness, being confronted by an overwhelming enemy.

You know, you fill in the blank, what is your enemy today?

What has been an enemy that you have struggled with?

There's biblical themes of darkness and light, tragedy and triumph.

And we've all had those times in our life.

Also, some quotes that I'm going to be looking at are, feelings are real.

I want to give these to you up front.

I want you to be thinking about them and listen for it in the Psalm as we read it.

Feelings are real.

They're not always true.

Feelings are real, but they're not always true.

Think about that one.

And then the other one, and I said this, if I said it once, I said it a million times, in counseling or in the hospital setting.

with soldiers or with people that are hurting.

Many people in different situations.

Give yourself permission to be human.

Give yourself permission to be human.

I'll tell you what that's about here in just a second.

Then there are misconceptions.

There are misconceptions about our faith that we have sometimes.

And I'll give an example of a man that I'll always remember from the hospital setting.

And there were definitely misconceptions in his faith.

And the times that are the most dangerous in our life is when we are in a dark valley, in a bad situation, in a difficult time when we feel like God has left us.

David asked four times, how long will you forget me?

How long will you forget me?

Forever.

being decimated or being in a time of turmoil is one thing, but being abandoned is far worse.

My fear, my greatest fear, would be that God would leave me.

I don't care what I'm going through.

The greatest fear would be abandoned by God.

It is being abandoned is far worse.

He says, how long will you forget me?

Forever.

You know, I never was real good at English grammar, so I can mess this up.

You know, if you look at this verse from David where he says, oh Lord, how long will you forget me forever?

Now there's a question mark behind that in my, now different people have different translations and you'll have different things said in it.

But I could almost, there were times that I felt so abandoned that I would read it as, and I don't know if David meant it this way, but how long will you forget me?

And then he answers it, forever.

That's how bad being abandoned or feeling like you're abandoned is.

It's like he answered his own question.

Long afflictions try our patience, and they make us very weary.

And weary is a unique word in itself, and it's the one that I gravitate to and have gone to in a long time.

My wife would ask me, are you tired?

I said, no, I'm not tired.

I'm weary.

Have you ever experienced a difference between the two?

Tired is when you can lay down and take a nap,

which I rarely do.

Just kidding.

That's the thing you do as you get older.

It's a requirement.

Now I forgot where I was going with that.

But he asked, the long afflictions try our patience and make us weary.

Weary is where, in my mind,

You cannot recover.

You cannot sit down and take a nap.

You're weary.

You can sit down and take a nap, but you get up and you're still weary.

It is so hard to put words to it.

Weary is, I don't want to anymore.

Weary is, I'm not going to get up and take care of that, whatever that is.

Or I can't talk to that person.

I am so tired.

I had times like that in the hospital setting where I was chaplain at Fort Worth Osteopathic Hospital.

I was the on-call chaplain.

On-call means when it really is an emergency situation.

I was thinking, you know, I was in seminary and thinking, oh, this will be an easy job.

One night there were four deaths in a row.

At about 50 to 55 minutes, and I left one room and went to the next.

And all four

were not expected.

I got to the end of the last one and I stood there in a hall waiting for the call for the fifth one.

I never did come but I went up to the ICU because there was one thing I needed to check on with a person and I went to leave and the way this ICU was set up is you go out either door but right there is the waiting room.

And I knew that if I went out that door, I'd look into the waiting room.

And if I looked in and met a person, saw eye to eye, I could not just keep walking.

I'd have to stop and talk to them.

And I knew I didn't have the energy.

I was weary.

I was spent.

And so I went out the back door.

I knew there was a back door and went down a fire escape.

You know, sometimes we get so weary

We don't want to do things like that.

Weariness, I think, is a very dangerous place to be in.

David felt like God had forgotten or abandoned him.

And you know, I said, feelings are real, but they're not always true.

What does that mean?

Feelings are real, they're not always true.

Have you ever

had a real bad day at work and you get home and your wife or husband, whoever fixes dinner, I'm fixing dinner now so I can say either way.

But the person says, are you ready for dinner?

And the person goes, in just a minute.

And so whoever was fixing dinner says, I wonder why they're mad at me.

And they say to the person, why are you mad at me?

Oh, I'm not mad at you.

They really weren't.

They weren't mad.

I was in an office the other day and I'm sitting there and these two guys had come out and they were standing there and they kept looking at me and talking and they'd laugh and they'd look back at me and I wonder why they're talking about me.

Then I realized when they left, there was a car out in the parking lot and they were looking over my head at the car and they were talking about this new car the guy got.

And I'm thinking, I felt like they were talking about me.

And feelings are real, they're not always true.

Patients feel like God is not with them.

That is a very common perception, a very common feeling that a patient has.

First of all, when a person goes into a hospital, there's one common thought they will always have, whether they've gone in to have an ingrown toenail removed or a heart surgery, and that is fear of death.

And there are times, depending on what that fear or how intense that fear is or whatever the circumstances are that are going on, that they feel like God has abandoned them.

God, where are you?

They pray and they feel like the prayers are bouncing off the ceiling.

And there was one gentleman that I'll never forget that he had terminal cancer.

And I had gone up and it was on the hospice floor in a hospital, Norfolk General.

And they said that they told me his condition and what was going to happen.

And they said he has a faith issue.

I said, okay, well, I'll go in and I started talking with him.

And he had faith, but it was a little skewed.

He said,

I don't know what's going on.

I'm supposed to die within a couple of weeks.

And I think about it.

He said, I'm supposed to die within a couple of weeks.

And so I said, oh, you want to get right with God or something like that.

You want to know Christ.

And he went, no, And that was the first lesson of listen, don't talk.

Listen, don't talk.

because I had it wrong.

He said, I said, tell me what's going on.

He said, before I had cancer and it went into remission, but I told God, do you hear what I said?

I told God that you've got to fix this.

We can't let this continue on like this.

And he did.

So what's that guy's impression of God?

We've got an agreement.

I can tell you what to do, God.

But this time he was going to die.

The cancer came back and it came back with a vengeance.

And he said, God is not curing this.

And he said, has God left me?

And so that set up a time to be able to use this and talk with him.

This is the Psalm that I talked with him about.

And I assured him, I knew he had a faith.

It just was a little off balance.

And that's the thing about this Psalm is that, you know, people of faith probably get more out of this.

You know, very few people that were people not of faith that I used this Psalm with.

It was usually people with faith.

But life got so hard that it tried our faith.

But feelings are real, they're not always true.

We feel like God has left us.

In verse 2, he says, how long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow, having sorrow in my heart?

How long will my enemy be exalted over me?

What does that mean, having counsel in my soul all the day long?

What do you do when you're in a difficult situation and you feel like God has left you?

I don't know about you, but I start thinking, okay, I need to do this or I need to do that.

I need to come up, I need to fix it, I need to, and I need myself right into the ground by the end of the day.

I am so weary because everything that I came up with was not going to work and was not going to work anyway, and I knew it.

But we go through that motion.

The other thing is, then that's when we turn to God and say, that's what I liked about this song, is that what he says, the one who never fails me.

Now, one other thing is, why did he go back to God?

Why did David go back to God?

He already said he felt like he was abandoned.

But in verse 3, he says, consider and answer me, O Lord.

See, he's just switched from feelings and emotions.

Now he's starting to think about this.

He's moved to the rational, the cognitive.

His feelings are what initiated and established those thoughts and feelings of why have you forgotten me?

Why have you abandoned me?

This is a plea for God to answer.

Why turn your back to God?

Why turn back to God?

Why in the times that you've felt abandoned by God, have you gone back and asked God to help you?

wait a minute, wasn't he the one that you felt like he abandoned you?

If he's abandoned, he's not there.

Why are you going back to him?

I'll tell you why.

Because you are a person of faith.

You have a faith and Christ has been there in the past and I'll talk a little bit about that.

But God is always with us.

There are many scriptures that we come across in the Bible that talks about, I will never leave you.

See, God is a covenant God.

He made a covenant with His people, and we are His people.

And God made that covenant, number one, to never leave, to never leave.

The other is He will never quit loving us, and I'll talk about that in just a second.

We feel overwhelmed and defeated by our enemy.

We feel like

The enemy has won.

The argument probably implies that what would be David's shame would prove to be God's shame, as well as David's demise would imply God was unable or unwilling to deliver his servant.

You know, sometimes we may be afraid of that, what would people say?

What would people say?

You remember

Excuse me, I pulled my marker out so now I got it.

Christ on the cross.

And those passing by were hurling abuse at him, wagging their heads and saying, you who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself.

If you are the son of God, come down from the cross.

In the same way, the chief priest also, along with the scribes and the elders, were mocking him and saying, he saved others, but he cannot save himself.

He is the king of Israel.

Let him now come down from the cross, and we shall believe him.

He trusts in God.

Let him deliver him now.

If he takes pleasure in him, for he said, I am the son of God.

And the robbers also who had been crucified with him were casting the same insults at him.

sometimes when we get to feeling the way we do about this, our enemies may boast and take our death or our demise, whatever that is in our situations, as proof that they were right.

Implication here is that God's honor would suffer.

The other thing he says in there is that, consider in verse 3, consider and answer me, O God, my God, enlighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death, lest my enemies say, I've overcome hell.

So we talked about the enemy overcoming, and that's what, but he says, enlighten my eyes.

This is not a term we use real often.

But there's an example of that.

First Samuel, the context of this story is Jonathan and the army is going after the Philistines and going to kill them, going after them, and they were going all day.

And Saul had made a curse.

that no one would eat until they had pursued the Philistines aggressively and to the end.

Well, Jonathan had not heard about this curse that his dad had put out.

And they were going through a forest and there was honey.

And there was honey coming from a comb and it was flowing.

And so Jonathan dipped his staff into that.

But Jonathan had not heard

when his father put the people under an oath.

Therefore he put out his end of his staff that was in his hand and he dipped it in the honey and put his hand up to his mouth and his eyes were brightened.

The psalmist or David's asking that, consider and answer me, O God, enlighten my eyes lest I sleep the sleep of death.

When we get in these bad times or these difficult times,

Our countenance even droops.

Our countenance even suffers.

When we're out of energy, when we're exhausted, our countenance falls.

Many times when we were in the military, we would be out and we were so tired that you just kind of, your countenance falls.

And when you eat, when you

Finally sit down, maybe take a nap and rest your feet.

You revive yourself and it actually, your countenance goes up.

And David is asking God to give light into his eyes.

Refresh my soul, O God.

Nourish me, O God.

See, he's turning to God again.

And that's the thing, after feeling like God had abandoned him, had God abandoned him?

Feelings are real, they're not always true.

We know that God did not abandon David.

I have too many papers.

My computer shut down two days ago.

So a lot of handwritten notes.

It won't make more than two hours.

We'll get this done.

Time I get all my notes straightened out.

Now what David did eventually was he went from negative feelings, these overwhelming feelings, then he started questioning, he started thinking about these things, he started rationalizing, he went from his emotions to cognitive thinking, and then

What David does is he expresses a profession of faith.

But I have trusted in thy loving kindness my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.

I will sing to the Lord because he has dealt bountifully with me.

David goes straight

to a profession of his faith.

In the midst of feeling like God has abandoned me and I have these thoughts in my mind day after day, but he still, he goes now to his faith and he stands firm on his faith.

His faith, he has an anchor faith.

And he said, but I will trust in the Lord.

David goes straight to his profession of faith.

Not a loss of faith,

but a proclamation of his faith.

There's another term that I learned early on that says that circumstances, and I believe this, circumstances don't make or break us.

They reveal us.

And you know, wherever we are in our faith is where we are.

And you know, the key though is it's okay to be there, but be growing in your faith.

That's where your discipleship comes in.

And growth is an implication of all of God's.

We see that through all of scripture.

You know, the prodigal son, I love that story.

And I've mentioned this before, that Henry Nouwen wrote this book about Michelangelo's painting in the Louvre of the prodigal son.

And so the book was, he sat there and he looked at the painting and he'd go day after day and I'm going, gosh, get over this.

Get the book to the end.

Because what do you do?

The hues in the painting were so bright and stuff that I don't even understand about paintings.

And go to the next page and he's back at the monastery and this nun sees he's

His eyes aren't bright, they're dimmed and what's wrong?

And so he's talking about this and she says, you know Mike or Henry, she says, here's the problem.

You can identify with the son, you can identify with the brother, but isn't it about time that you identify with the father?

Right between the eyes.

You identify with the father.

How do you identify with the father?

You accept people for who they are.

You minister to people.

You have your arms open to people.

You love people.

All of that.

So growth is implied.

And the more we grow, the more we're able to use or stand on our anchor faith.

That's when the anchor holds.

And that's why we're able to say like David, but I trust.

in your loving kindness.

David says that I feel like you've abandoned me, but even though I feel God has left me, I know he hasn't.

I know he hasn't.

It's not a guess.

Well, I don't think he has.

But as we continue to grow in our faith, we know that God hasn't left us.

What kept David or what keeps you from falling away from your faith during difficult times like this?

Think about that just for a moment.

What has kept you clinging to your faith, even though you may have felt like God has left you?

That's an important question you want to answer and you want to identify that.

Now, for David,

And I look back at my life and it's the same as he established his faith early on from childhood.

But wherever you are, wherever you've established your faith, that's your starting point.

Grow from there.

He grew proactively, not passively, in his faith.

When I was younger growing up, I carried a Bible.

Now I'm not kidding you.

It was the one with the pictures in it.

And I'd look at the pictures, but I carried it.

I wore out the spine.

I didn't, the pages were still stuck together.

That wasn't proactive.

That was a very passive growth, if you want to call it spiritual growth, if you want to call it growth at all.

But it wasn't until I start growing that I start seeing things different.

He experienced firsthand God's loving kindness.

Now that's an important word.

We have, there can be

several ways that that word can be interpreted.

And that's an important word.

Underline that word in your Bible.

There are a number of translations for the Hebrew word for God's love, steadfast love, unfailing love, loving kindness, love, mercy.

This is that covenant love.

God is a covenant God.

What does it mean to be the covenant God?

That means that God will hold to his covenant that he established and will not deviate from it no matter what the Hebrew children did as they came out of Egypt or times when Moses went up to the mountain and they fashioned the calf or when we sin or it doesn't matter.

God is faithful.

That is that covenant love, that steadfast love.

We have a familiar text to illustrate the characteristics of God's love.

Psalms 23.

You remember what it says?

God's love and mercy, depending on your translation, or God's steadfast love will follow me all the days of my life.

Now follow everywhere I read is not a good translation for that word.

The better word is pursue.

God's faithfulness and love has pursued me, will pursue me all the days of my life.

Whenever you are, if there was ever a time you were away from God, did you feel God pursuing you?

I did.

I always had these thoughts that God is back there waiting for me.

He is pursuing me by giving me those thoughts.

God pursues us.

He will not let you go.

David knew that.

And even though you felt like God had left you, David knew his loving kindness was there.

Will never go.

I've talked and many of you have heard me talk about this, but David looked back into his life and saw how God

was active in his life and how God took care of him and God's salvation.

And he saw all of that.

He looked back and he saw what God had done for him.

Do you remember the story of when the Israelites went across the Jordan?

What did Joshua tell one member from each tribe to do?

Pick up one stone?

And when we get to the other side, he told them to build a monument.

And when your children ask you what does that monument stand for, you tell them what God did in your life, that God parted the waters, that God brought you into this.

See, David knew about those stories.

David had memory stones when he was a young shepherd, when he slayed the lion.

I can't imagine wrestling a bear and a lion.

I can't imagine that, but that's what the shepherd did.

David had those memories, how God had delivered him.

David had the memories about standing before Saul.

I wonder if he felt like, uh-oh.

this may not go too well.

But David knew he had a confidence in his faith and stepped forward.

And he had that memory stone that God had delivered him.

I'd encourage you to write down memory stones.

Put them in the back of your Bible.

Think back over your life and the times that God has been good to you and God has taken care of the issues.

And when you felt like God has left you, that

He let you know that he really didn't.

Psalms 13 is a window into David's life.

Through this window, we see David's humanity.

How did we see his humanity?

Do you see how honest he got with God at the very beginning?

God, I feel like you've left me.

You know, I kind of hesitate to say something like that to God.

But what this psalm is doing is showing us David's humanity.

And we can speak to God sincerely and respectfully and honestly.

We can share what's on our mind.

We can give ourselves permission to be human.

You know what's funny about that is I hate to say certain things to God, but God already knows it to begin with.

Through this window, we see David's humanity.

his honesty with God, his faith, and his dependency on God.

Psalms 13 serves the same purpose for us.

We can humbly acknowledge our feelings.

Listen to this.

We can humbly acknowledge our feelings.

Give yourself permission to be human.

We can acknowledge those human feelings before God.

And there are times when you're going to feel abandoned.

But has God really abandoned you?

If anything else, I abandon God at times.

Stand firm on our faith, just like David did.

That's what this Psalm can show us, how to stand firm on this faith.

And it is an anchor.

And you all know what an anchor does.

We can also remember and acknowledge from where our help comes.

Have you ever had the thought that, oh, I can do this.

I got this.

Mike's got this.

That's a joke.

That's that commercial.

Mike's got this.

I'm going to get a t-shirt that says Mike's got this.

But you see, I think I do at times.

And boy, it takes me a long time to clean the mess up.

When I let God take care of it, when I go to God, God's always perfect.

God's always right.

And there's no mess to clean up.

Through this Psalm, we can give God praise and thanks for what He has done in our lives.

that's one thing that we don't ever want to forget, and that is to forget what God has done for us.

Sometimes read Psalms 106.

I call it the I forgot Psalms.

Read it and it'll show you, it'll say, and the Israelites forgot and then they sinned.

The Israelites forgot and then they sinned.

God delivered the Israelites and they forgot and they sinned.

See, when we forget where our help comes from,

Even though we may feel abandoned by God, but we turn back to our anchor faith, God's still there, but we recognize that's where my help comes from.

It's not me.

It's God.

There is a humbleness in that.

And the other thing that this can allow us to do is to press on.

Press on.

That's one of the most important things.

You may have your doubts as God has left me, but you never want to let that stop you.

people of faith, you're going to have thoughts and feelings like that.

But when we go back to God, that's when we can go on with life.

And I look back at the times and the things in our life

in my life and the things that God is.

There's no way I can say Mike's got this because I know I don't.

Feelings are real.

They're not always true.

Always remember that.

Circumstances don't make or break us.

They reveal us.

Stand on and use your faith.

That's what it's for.

That's what it's for in this life.

We don't know because we don't know what lies ahead.

Hold fast to your faith.

Your faith is your anchor in life.