WHEN GOD SEEMS FAR AWAY

(A Psalm of David – Psalm 13)

5/2/99

INTRO: EX. of times when you can read the Bible and verses just jump out at you - you are challenged, blessed, etc.

Other times, you can read (even the same passage) and it does not move you the way it once did.

You have had seasons of prayer when it seemed like God was your closest friend, He answered all the time, etc.

Other times, it seems like there is not even a God. It seems like your prayers bounce off of the wall.

Why does God often seems far removed?

1) Because of sin that has broken fellowship (Is. 59:1-2; Dt. 31:17-18)

Isaiah 59:1-2

Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: [2] But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.

Deut. 31:17-18

Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day. Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us? [18] And I will surely hide my face in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods.

When you allow sin to go unconfessed, God says, "OK, you want it that way: You can pray alone
read Bible alone
witness alone
work alone."

We must qualify to be close to God (See: Psalm 24:3-6)

2) We simply do not draw nigh to God (we experience seasons of drought in our prayer lives)

Joh 14:23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

3) To test our faith (this is the situation in this psalm)

(To keep us close to God; to teach us lessons we would not otherwise learn).

God was preparing David to be "a man after God's own heart." Real faith is sometimes never achieved except in the crucible of suffering.

*** YOU NEED TO KNOW WHAT TO DO WHEN GOD SEEMS FAR AWAY.**

What do you do when God seems distant?

I. REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE NOT ALONE (V. 1-2)
(A cry of despair - David's problem)

(You are not the only one to feel this way; David felt this way)

Examples: Elijah (1 Kings 19)
Paul (Acts 18:9,10)

The phrase "How long", which occurs four times in verses 1 and 2 expresses David's anguish (pain) and misery of his soul.

Things seem hopeless to David, as he analyzes the situation from a human perspective.
Saul's persecutions probably lasted for 8 or 9 years; and no end was in sight for David (I Sam. 29:1). The young man David spends 500 days passing through a forest, hiding in the caves, etc.

Many Christians with dejected hearts have thought that God has forsaken and forgotten them.

Does God forget? NO!

"Hide" = to cover over, to veil the face.

EX. Moses "hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God" (Ex. 3:6)

"Hide thy face" - as if God was careless of David's situation or uninterested in his plight.

Hymn: “Does Jesus Care…I know He cares”

"Take counsel in my soul" = idea of wrestling with worried thoughts.

For David it seemed like unrighteousness was winning.

The picture is of someone standing triumphantly above its conquered victim. . . like a boxer who just gave his opponent a knock-out blow.

II. PERSIST IN GOING TO GOD IN PRAYER (V. 3-4)

(A call for help - David's prayer)

Example: The Persistent woman who kept on going to the unjust Judge to relieve her of her adversary.

The tendency is to give up praying. “To say why Pray? God does not hear.”

What is the antidote for the feeling of hopelessness? -

PRAYER!

"Lighten mine eyes" = give light (brightness) to my eyes that are dimmed with sorrow.

David is saying: "Cheer me up with a victory! Inject life into me, Lord! Revive my spirit, restore my courage."

The eye of a person reveals the inward disposition.

Sorrow, grief, trouble, or sin darkens its brightness.

EX. when Jonathan recovered from the faintness of hunger after eating some honey, the Bible says, "His eyes brightened." (I Sam. 14:27).

When it seems like God is far away, I get nervous. My stomach turns, I feel depressed and tired.

The secret to joyful, peaceful lives: Hand all your worries and anxieties over to God (Phil. 4:6-7; "Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you.")

HYMN: "All your anxieties, all your cares, bring to the mercy seat, leave them there; Never a burden He cannot bear; Never a friend like Jesus."

"It is marvelous how certainly prayer proves to be a ladder from the deepest dungeon into the most radiant day." (F.B. Meyer, Psalms, p. 23)

Jas 4:8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you

III. EXPECT GOD TO BE FAITHFUL IN THE END (V. 5-6)

(A confident faith - David's peace)

David's believing prayer restored his trust in God's aid, and then faith gained the victory over despondency.

***SING "FAITH IS THE VICTORY" (p. 205 - vs. 1 & 2)

Have such a confidence (faith) in the Lord that no matter what happens, you will:

A. DETERMINE TO TRUST GOD'S LOYAL LOVE

Trouble seems to be an inseparable feature of man's existence; inequalities and injustices are an integral part of his life. Nothing, however, prevents an utter sinking of the heart and consequent breakdown of endurance as the hope which springs from faith in God (Cohen, Psalms, p. 32).

Illust. The comfort it brings to know a friend is always there when you need him.

"I have trusted" = I have clung on to
ILLUS: of a little child clinging on to the dress of her mother.

B. DETERMINE TO REJOICE IN GOD'S SALVATION

Confidence of a future blessing gives comfort in the present.

David expresses a believing joy which anticipates the certainty of his prayer being answered.

After lying for some time in the Bishop of London's coal house, Mr. John Philpot was rebuked for singing hymns in prison, and he answered: "I have so much joy that I cannot lament; but day and night I never was so merry before."

C. DETERMINE TO SING BECAUSE OF GOD'S FULL BENEFITS

Illust. The benefits of the Job cannot match God's benefits.

"Dealt bountifully" = to pay back abundantly, to reward, deal fully or adequately, benefit.

CONCLU: David's soul at the beginning of the Psalm was like a ship being tossed back and forth in a violent storm. At the end of the Psalm, David's soul is calm. What once was rage and turmoil is now peaceful.

The Psalm that begins in a sigh ends in a song!

Psalm 30:5
For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.

1. Remember that you are not alone

2. Persist in going to God in prayer

3. Expect God to be faithful in the end.

HYMN "Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus" - p. 418.

What to do when you

Don't Feel God's Presence

(From a Psalm of David – Psalm 13 and Selected Passages)

9/12/04

Why does God seem distant? To Test You (2 Chron. 32:31)
To Chastise You (Is. 59:1-2)

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(A cry of <u>despair</u> - David's problem)
(You are not the only one to feel this way; David felt this way)

II. <u>PERSIST</u> IN GOING TO GOD IN <u>PRAYER</u> (V. 3-4)
(A call for <u>help</u> - David's prayer)

III. <u>EXPECT</u> GOD TO BE <u>FAITHFUL IN THE END</u> (V. 5-6)
(A confident <u>faith</u> - David's peace)
Have such a confidence (faith) in the Lord that no matter what happens, you will:

A. DETERMINE TO <u>TRUST</u> GOD'S LOYAL LOVE

B. DETERMINE TO <u>REJOICE</u> IN GOD'S SALVATION

C. DETERMINE TO <u>SING</u> BECAUSE OF GOD'S FULL BENEFITS

See: James 4:1-10
If Worldliness or some other sin is the reason for your distance from God, it is time to:

- REPENT OF SIN
- DRAW CLOSE TO GOD