

Midweek Study

Dr. Josh Franklin • Senior Pastor



When God Feels Far Away

Psalm 13:1-6

Psalm 13 is a psalm of lament attributed to King David, likely written during his difficult years of exile while King Saul was pursuing him (1 Samuel 20:3). Warren Wiersbe notes, "By the grace of God, David turned his sufferings into songs and left those songs behind to encourage us in our trials."¹

I. God's Distance (Psalm 13:1-2)

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 daily? How long will my enemy be exalted over me?

- The Hebrew word for "forget" implies being neglected or overlooked.
- Timothy Cruso once wrote, "The departures of God from true believers are never final; they may be tedious, but they are temporary"²
- God's face represents His favor and blessing in biblical language.
- Self-reliance leads to increased distress rather than peace.
- Samuel Rutherford observed: "Christ's absence is of special use, and hath some nourishing virtue in it."
- External problems are magnified when God seems distant.
- Andrew Fuller notes: "It is not under the sharpest, but the longest trials, that we are most in danger of fainting."³

II. David's Desperation (Psalm 13:3-4)

Consider and hear me, O LORD my God; Enlighten my eyes, Lest I sleep the sleep of death; Lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed against him"; Lest those who trouble me rejoice when I am moved.

- Despite feeling forgotten, David affirms his covenant relationship with God (notice the "my" in "my God" as a personal claim of connection between him and God)
- "Enlighten my eyes, Lest I sleep the sleep of death" - Could refer to physical revival (1 Samuel 14:27) or spiritual illumination (Psalm 19:8)
- Matthew Henry reminds us: "Days of trouble must be days of prayer"⁴

¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, Be Worshipful, 1st ed., "Be" Commentary Series (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications Ministries, 2004), 55–58

² As quoted by C. H. Spurgeon, The Treasury of David: Psalms 1-26, vol. 1 (London; Edinburgh; New York: Marshall Brothers, n.d.), 151–159.

³ Ibid.

⁴ As quoted in Steven Lawson, Psalms 1–75, ed. Max Anders, vol. 11, Holman Old Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2004), 70–73.

III. David's **Decision** (Psalm 13:5)

But I have trusted in Your mercy; My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation.

A. The **Choice** to Trust God's Character

- The word "But" marks a decisive turning point in the psalm.
- "Mercy" (Hebrew: chesed) refers to God's covenant faithfulness and steadfast love.

B. The **Confidence** this Choice Brings

- "My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation" - Though deliverance hasn't yet come, David anticipates it with certainty.

IV. David's **Delight** (Psalm 13:6)

I will **sing** to the LORD, Because He has dealt bountifully with me.

A. The **Commitment** to Praise

- Joseph Parker notes: This psalm "begins with winter and ends with summer"⁵

B. The **Conviction** of God's Blessings

- "Because He has dealt bountifully with me" - Remarkably, David speaks in the past tense—as if deliverance has already occurred.

What to Do When God Feels Far Away

- A. **Be Honest About Your Feelings** - God invites honest expression and is not threatened by our questions.
- B. **Talk to Your Heavenly Father** - Turn complaints into specific requests for God's attention and help.
- C. **Rest in Your Faith** - Choose to trust God's character despite how you feel. Remind yourself of God's faithfulness in previous situations.
- D. **Express Hope in Your Future** - Live today with optimism – God is on the throne. He will take care of you. As David demonstrates, we can rejoice in promised salvation before experiencing it.
- E. **Praise God in Advance** – Practice gratitude as an expression of faith. Thank God in advance for what He will do through this season. (See **Philippians 4:6-7**)

Other Practical Ideas:

1. Consider Journaling - Write down your feelings when God seems distant, then transform these thoughts into prayers and eventually into praise.
2. Memorize Related Verses - Store up God's promises for times when His presence feels far away (**Joshua 1:5, Hebrews 13:5**).
3. Pray when you feel like it, pray when you don't feel like it, pray until you do feel like it!
4. Lean on Christian friends - Share your struggles with trusted believers who can encourage you and remind you of God's faithfulness. Surround yourself with faith-filled believers.
5. Look Beyond Yourself - Sometimes serving others can lift us out of spiritual doldrums and reconnect us with God's purposes.

⁵ Ibid.