

## Walking By Faith Not Feelings, Psalm 13

We all wrestle with negative feelings.

Sometimes its depression. At other times it's despondency. We feel listless.

At times we feel hopeless, guilty, inferior, failure, or stress and anxiety.

Sometimes we feel rejected, forgotten, unimportant to those we care about.

At other times we feel joy, peace, security, loved, clean at the conscience level, we feel confident and at rest with the world.

That was not David's condition in Psalm 13. He cried out to God because he felt forgotten. He felt like God had hidden his face from him. He feels like his enemy has the upper hand. He prayed, but God didn't seem to answer.

**1** How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? **2** How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

**3** Consider and answer me, O LORD my God; light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death, **4** lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed over him," lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken.

**5** But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. **6** I will sing to the LORD, because he has dealt bountifully with me.

The context is probably David in his late teens being pursued by Saul in the wilderness. He has between 400 and 600 men following him, but Saul has an army of 3,000.

When David was about 15 the prophet, Samuel, anointed him with oil and told him he would be the next king of Israel.

Then under God's anointing, he killed Goliath. Saul's troops rallied to him and he became successful in battle.

"Saul has killed his thousands, but David his ten thousands."

Saul became Jealous. He tried to kill David, and David fled into the wilderness. David didn't become king until he was about thirty.

Several years have passed since he fled from Saul. For David, it is a time of great trial, deprivation, and suffering.

Psalm 13 records David's temptations to live by his fears and feelings rather than by faith in God's word—the promise that he would someday be king. David is at a low point.

Psalm 13 is in the Bible to exhort us to do the opposite—to walk by faith not feelings. That is the big idea. **Walk by Faith not by your feelings.** It has three movements. 1. David's Feelings 2. David's Objectivity 3. David's Decision.

#### **A. Vs 1-2 DAVID'S FEELINGS**

**1** How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? **2** How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

Four times David pleads with God, "How long, O Lord?"

He wants deliverance from depression. As we've noted, the occasion is probably his flight from Saul into the Wilderness during his twenties.

How does he feel? He feels forgotten. He ask God, "*Will you forget me forever?*" God has made promises to him. They don't seem to be happening.

He feels like God has hidden his face from him. He asks, "*How long will you hide your face from me?*" It feels like God is a million miles away.

He feels "*sorrow in his heart all the day.*"

He feels like a failure. He feels crushed by a conquering enemy. He asks, "*How long will my enemy be exalted over me?*"

This should cause us to think hard. Hasn't God promised to answer prayer? That was Jesus' promise in John's gospel.

"If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you." (John 15:7).

What is wrong? Why isn't God answering?

This paradox is a good example of "The Rule of Faith." Every text, in this case dealing with prayer, can only be understood in the context of everything else the Bible says about that subject.

David was not alone in his feelings of abandonment. It was worse with Jeremiah.

Jeremiah's job was lonely. It was filled with stress, rejection, and deprivation. God often seemed miles away. Because Jeremiah wrote so much about his depressions and sorrows, he is called "the weeping prophet."

"Cursed be the day on which I was born! The day when my mother bore me, let it not be blessed! Cursed be the man who brought the news to my father, "A son is born to you," making him very glad. Let that man be like the cities that the LORD overthrew without pity; let him hear a cry in the morning and an alarm at noon, because he did not kill me in the womb; so my mother would have been my grave, and her womb forever great. Why did I come out from the womb to see toil and sorrow, and spend my days in shame?" (Jeremiah 20:14–18).

How about the apostle Paul? He was in the same boat and was willing to share his feelings with us.

"For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead." (2 Corinthians 1:8–9).

Yes, David is depressed, but he also knows that his emotions are unstable and undependable. David is aware that his sin nature distorts and twists his emotions. He cannot rely on them.

God created emotions to be our servants. God gave Adam & Eve emotions to encourage righteousness.

And they did until they sinned.

Dominated by sin our emotions are now untrustworthy. They come and go spontaneously.

Sometimes they support virtue and godliness. For example, I feel like worshipping. I feel like serving. I feel like keeping my commitments. I feel like prayer. I feel rejoicing in God's presence. I feel like family devotion. I feel like going to church, etc.

Sometimes they don't support obedience. I feel like sleeping in and skipping church. I feel depressed and lethargic. I don't feel like prayer or scripture.

I feel anxious and fearful.

I feel bitter and unforgiving.

I feel unloved and rejected.

I feel unappreciated.

It doesn't feel like the Bible is true.

It doesn't feel like God is there.

### **Digression to Discuss Our Culture's Impact**

In addition, the culture in which God has embedded us amplifies the problem. As much as we don't want to admit it, our surrounding culture affects us.

And the underlying presupposition of modern secularism is that feelings are not a problem, rather they are our rule and guide.

Modern culture assumes that objective standards outside of my feelings, i.e. the Ten Commandments, the Bible, don't exist, and if they did exist they wouldn't matter anyway.

Only feelings matter. Feelings are the compass by which the modern man runs his life.

Philosopher, Charles Taylor, has labeled this outlook "*Expressive Individualism.*" "Expressive" means, my behavior should be an expression of my feelings.

“Individualism” means, nothing matters but me the individual. Obligations to social institutions—family, church, country, employer, etc. don’t matter.

People that have adopted expressive individualism feel no obligation to the larger society, no obligation to any objective truth outside of themselves. Objective truths don’t exist.

My feelings define truth. Feelings rule. How I feel at the moment is utterly dominant, and should be expressed through my behavior. If I’m depressed its OK to be surly. If I’m anxious its OK to withdraw from others. If I’m angry its OK to act it out.

Feelings define me. Feelings motivate me. Feelings authenticate me. The authentic person lives according to their feelings.

Feelings should be expressed or acted out.

Where did this come from? It came from Rousseau, the 18<sup>th</sup> century philosopher and architect of the Enlightenment or Modernism.

He was an evil madman.

Glen Sunshine said “If I was in a room with Hitler and Rousseau and only had two bullets, I’d shoot Rousseau twice.”

In the words of Carl Trueman, Rousseau taught that—

Uncultured instincts and feelings are really who we are; civilization merely hinders, twists, and perverts these, making us conform to its demands and rendering us inauthentic.<sup>1</sup>

This is not Christianity. Christians live by objective truth. Objective truth is about facts outside of myself that are true no matter how I feel about them.

When our feelings are going South and the facts are going North, we go North.

Christians live by obligations to truths outside of ourselves. (the Bible).

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<sup>1</sup> Carl Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, The Gospel Coalition, Feb 25, 2020

We perform obligations to social institutions outside of ourselves—family, church, employer, and state.

Facts not feelings rule Believers.

### ***B. Vs 3-4 DAVID'S OBJECTIVITY***

How does David handle these negative feelings? He doesn't turn inward. He doesn't look to his feelings to discover the truth. He looks outside of himself. He ignores his feelings and turns to the great objective Truth outside of David.

He turns to God in prayer.

**3** Consider and answer me, O LORD my God; light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death, **4** lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed over him," lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken.

David prays for revelation. God, unveil yourself. *"Light up my eyes lest I sleep the sleep of death."*

David asks God for deliverance from his enemies *"Lest my enemy say, 'I have prevailed over him.'"*

He asks God to answer his prayer. He turns to God for relief.

Nothing helps emotional depression like telling God how you really feel. "God, I feel depressed."

"God, I don't feel like praying; help me."

"God, it doesn't feel like you're there."

"God, it feels like you're hiding your face from me."

"God, it feels like you're angry with me, but I know you are not."

"God, I don't feel like going to church this morning, but I know you want me to. Help me!"

"God, I feel really condemned, but I know I am not."

“God, I’m angry with you, but I know I shouldn’t be. Help me!”

“God, it feels like you’re a million miles away, but I know you’re not.”

Tell God how you really feel. It’s OK. He is omniscient. He already knows the depths of your feeling much more precisely than you.

That is how Jesus responded to the cross.

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.” (Psalm 22:1–2).

This means Christ perfectly understands how you feel. You can run to him.

This was how Paul felt in Ephesus. It was how Jeremiah felt. It is why David wrote Psalm 13.

### **C. VS 5-6 DAVID’S DECISION**

**5** But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. **6** I will sing to the LORD, because he has dealt bountifully with me.

David decides to live by truth outside of himself.

Vs 5. *“I have trusted in your steadfast love.”*

*“His heart rejoices in God’s salvation.”*

He meditates on God’s past mercies, not his future fears.

Vs 6. He begins to sing to the Lord as he remembers how bountifully God has dealt with him in the past.

### **D. APPLICATION**

#### ***1. Saving Faith lives by objective truth not feelings.***

God’s Love is not always a set of warm, fuzzy feelings. It is often outside of our experience. Some days we feel loved. Other days we don’t. But God’s love does not change with our emotions. God said,

"I will never leave you nor forsake you." Heb 13:5

"The Lord is gracious and merciful. Slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness." Exodus 34:6

"Nothing can separate us...from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:39).

What was true yesterday, when you felt like it was true, has not changed, because now you don't *feel* like it is true.

Be like David. Turn from your feelings to objective reality.

"But I have trusted in your steadfast love. My heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord because he has dealt bountifully with me."

Remember, God rejected Jesus so that he would never have to reject you.

## *2. God's Word Amplifies Faith*

Where do we get this kind of faith? "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing from the word of God."

Read the Bible. Many of you lack this faith because you don't immerse yourself in scripture and good books on the Christian Life. You don't spend time in prayer.

Therefore, your faith is weak and your emotions overwhelm your faith.

The more we live by faith the more our feelings cooperate with what is true. This is part of what Jesus meant when he said,

"To he that has more will be given. But to he that has not, even the little that he has will be taken away."

Objective truth is the engine of the Believers train. Feelings are the Caboose. God's truth pulls and leads our feelings.

For Unbelievers, Feeling/emotions are the engine and objective truth is the caboose. Feelings pull and lead objective truth.



If we live by objective truth our feelings will slowly change and become increasingly supportive, and that is what we want.