

# When God Forsakes

## By Michael Cocoris

Cocoris:

The man I had in mind lost his job because of a layoff. At that point he thought, that was not serious, after all he was, qualified, experienced, had a good record. He would simply apply and get another one. So the first thing he did was apply to all the companies that needed his kind of expertise, that [went] driving distance of his home. But there was no job. Then he applied at some employment agencies. He waited, and there was no job. He and his wife were Christians, so they began to pray. They asked God, to simply provide, a job, but there was no job. Then it began to get serious, and [then their], unemployment checks started to run out. The savings account started to, dwindle. The cupboard looked like it might be bare. He was on his feet by day looking for jobs. He was on his knees at night looking for justice, and then it's when it happened. At first it was a feeling, and then it became a hung thought, and finally, a growing conviction. God, has forgotten him. God isn't listenin'. God, has forsaken him. A man and his wife, were sitting in the waiting room of a hospital. He put his hand on top of hers and said, "It'll be alright." They were sure it would be alright. After all, the most competent doctors they knew were operating on their daughter. "It'll be alright." But the minutes, crept, into hours. Then they began to wonder. "Why is it taking so long?" Of course they were Christians. They had an ultimate resource, and so one suggested to the other that they slip over to the chapel and, commit it again to the Lord and that they did, and then they looked at each other. The time, the long, time. Not knowing was worse than knowing. Then it's gonna get. At first it was just a thought, a feelin'. Maybe, this isn't goin' to be alright. Maybe, our daughter isn't gonna come out of this operation okay. I mean parents have had children died in the operating room. There was that, feelin', that

maybe God hadn't heard their prayer. Maybe God wasn't listenin', and maybe God, had forgotten.

03:20 You ever had an experience like that? Have you ever felt like God had forsaken you? If you'd been a Christian anytime at all, I suspect you might have had to experience, that there are times, when we all feel like God has forsaken us, and that's not the case at all. Rather it's we have forsaken him. I'm not talking about those times, as a general rule in those times, we're not, seeking him. There is no hunger and thirst after him. Rather I'm talking about the times when you really want him. I mean, you know as well as I that there is a kind of relationship that you can have with the Lord, where he becomes as close and as intimate as your dearest friend. A sense that you have a freedom within that you talk to him, and I don't know how to explain it but you know what I mean. You just know he's there, and then they're other times, when you're not sure he's there at all. Have you ever had an experience like that? Have you ever felt like God has forgotten you? Have you ever prayed, and prayed earnestly, and not gotten an answer? I remember, one of the first times that happened to me, on a prolonged scale. I just graduated from seminary, and started traveling as an intenerate evangelist, and ah, [inaudible] that I, for lack of a better term we call a dry spell in my spiritual life. My first thought, I wasn't sure at all what I'd done, and, I, turned introspective and I, tried to look at my heart and look at my life and see what I've done that was wrong and why he was mad at me and, ah, I, I'd confessed every sin I could think of. Matter of fact I've confessed them twice, and then it really got serious with me. I mean I, ah, prayed an-and said, "Lord what happened? I, I-I thought like we used to have a great relationship and somehow, I don't feel like I used to." I read the Bible. Nothin'. At least like not it used to be.

05:28 I remember that it all came to a climax one night, and I decided, that um, I wasn't gonna go to bed until I got it settled, or solved. I thought I, I thought I was gonna read my Bible, 'til I could find the answer. Ahh, [inaudible] worn out, and I dozed off. The next mornin' when I, awoke, the thought that popped into my mind was this. I had been to a conference with Billy Graham that spoken to, 1,000 preachers and I, had been in the congregation. Dr. Graham said this. He said, "You oughta read the Psalms. You oughta read them, three psalms, or five psalms, everyday." And in urging all of those pastors and preachers to read the Psalms he made this statement, "Every experience that a believer can have, the psalmists had." Now when I woke up that next morning, that's what was ringing in my ear, and I thought, "I should be reading the Psalms!" If what I'm having is a valid experience, or anything close to what believers normally go through and if he's right, then surely it's in the Psalms. So I decided, that day, I would read the Psalms, until I found the problem. Fortunately, there are 150 of those things.

[Audience laughter]

Fortunately, it wasn't number 99. It was number 13, and I learned somethin' that day, that has ah, been with me ever since, and I'd like to share it with you this mornin'. Will you turn with me, to Psalm 13, as we discuss what happens, when you feel like God has forsaken you. I'm gonna begin reading with verse 1. David says, "How long will you forget me, O Lord? 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 shall mine enemy be exalted over me? Consider, and hear me, O Lord, my God. Lighten mine eyes lest I sleep the sleep of death. Lest mine enemy say, I have

prevailed against him and those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved. But I have trusted in thy mercy. My heart shall rejoice in thy salvation. I will sing unto the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully, with me."

**08:16** These short, six verses can be divided, into three parts. Each part, has two verses. In the first two verses, David simply laments his situation, and then in verses 3 and 4, he begins, to pray. Then in verses 5 and 6, he gives us the solution to his dilemma. So let's begin looking at this passage by looking at his lament. He begins by saying, "How long will you forget me O Lord? Forever? How long, will you hide, your face from me?" I suppose when we read that immediately want to know exactly what he's talking about. The truth of the matter is, we do not really know. It was Charles Haddon Spurgeon who said, "All attempt, to find the birthplace of this psalm are but guesses." The simple reality is, nobody knows for certain, the background of this psalm. But many commentators suggest that this took place, during the time, when Saul was seeking, David, and David is running. He's trying to get away from Saul, and he feels like that God has forsaken him, so he laments. He cries out and he says, "How long will you forget me? How long, will you hide, your face from me?" These, phrases seem to indicate, that David felt that God was withholding his favor, from him. As a matter of fact the little phrase, "Hide your face from me," probably means just that, that you have, withheld your favor. The image is of going in [inaudible] a father and, asking for something and instead of him looking at you and reaching for his wallet, he turns his back, and looks the other way. So as to withhold, the favor that you are asking of him. Well that's the way David feels. He feels like God has forgotten, and God has forsaken. God has withheld, his favor. Has that ever happened to you? You ever felt that way? Some of you look like you know what I'm talking about. You know what I'm talking

about? When I first became the pastor of the Church of the Open Door, I'd invited a, staff member to join us, who, lived in Dallas, Texas, and, because of the housing market, the, inflation rate has just gone up, terribly so. Ah, he decided to move out. In matter of fact he stayed with us for a while, 'til he could, sell his house in Dallas and buy a house in Los Angeles. He came out in October, and he started looking for a house. In most of October there was nothin', and most of November there was nothin'. Christmas came. He flew home to, stay with family for Christmas and he came back and [went] all through of the month of January. Weeks and months had passed, and still he could not find a house he could afford. He could not find a buyer, that would take his house in Dallas, and I recall us sitting in the car in front of my house one night. He'd gotten home late, and Dick and I were talking and he, said to me, "Mike I don't understand," said, "I've prayed. I've looked." Then he looked at me and he said, "What do you do, when there is nothin'?" And that's the question of this time. What do you do? When there is nothin', from God." David laments, that God, had forgotten him.

12:04 Now, what do you do, when you seek that course, and it doesn't work? Well, most turn to their own devices, and that's precisely what David did. Look at verse 2, "How long will I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart, daily?" In verse 1 he laments, that, God, had forgotten him. In verse 2 he laments, that his own counsel, had failed him. Evidently. When God did not answer, he sought his own advice so to speak. He sought his own counsel. If the background of this psalm is Saul seeking David, and hunting, hunting him, then perhaps what, this means is that, David tried all kinds of different plans, to get away from Saul. He tried seeking refuge among the Moabites. He hid, in the wilderness. He became like an outlaw hiding in the caves. He even became a [inaudible] in the service of the Philistines, and yet all of this

time he was being hunted, like a wild animal, and so he was saying, I came up with my own plan, and it, too, failed. Martin Luther once said, of this passage, "And David's heart is like a raging sea, in which all sorts of counsels move up and down. He tried, on all hands, to find a hole through which he can escape. He thinks of various plans and still is utterly, at a loss, of what, to advise." Now, he not only tried several of his plans that they failed, but that too was prolonged. First he says, "How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily." The word translated "sorrow" was literally "grief." If the failure of his own plans was like grief in his soul. You could imagine if you've ever experienced the death of a loved one or a close friend, then you have some, semblance of an idea of what David felt, and notice he says, that it was a daily, experience. You see when you have the, death of a loved one, you go through the stages of grief and, can, somehow, in most cases, heal. But in this case, it is prolonged, and he is seeking one solution and it fails, and he seeks another, and it doesn't work, and so there is the daily grief and there's a cumulative effect, and he is lamenting, and he is saying, how long, is this going to go on?

15:00 There's one other death in his lament. He says in the latter part of verse 2, "How long shall my enemy, be exalted over me?" Not only has God failed him, or at least, seemingly forgotten him. Not only has his own counsel failed, but on top of all that, his enemy, is being exalted over him. He's not winning. He's losin"! And he is lamented, and David says, how long, is this going to happen? There was a French proverb that said, "Sickness comes on horseback, and goes away, on, foot." Well that's the way David felt. They're coming at him. My trouble. My problems. My prayer, and I'm not finding any relief, or any solution. One more observation before we move on. Look at verse 1. He says, "How long?" Look at verse 1, "How long?" Verse 2, "How long?"

Verse 2, "How long?" What if the question is "how long?" I think when we get into a trial, when we get into a problem, we very often ask the question, "why?" And that question is perhaps dealt with in other passages of Scripture, but in this passage the question is not "why?" As much as it is, "how long?" It's *the*, duration. It becomes part of the problem, and a lot, of the pressure. The old divine writers hundreds of years ago [wrote] on this passage says, it is not under the sharpest, but under the longest trial, that we're in the most danger, of fainteth. It's sometimes it's the ah, fear, it's as simple as the extent of the time, that becomes the weight of the pressure. At any rate, David begins the passage, by lamenting, his situation.

**17:20** Now what do you do, in that situation? In verses 1 and 2 David is simply asking questions. All of the statements are not statements at all. They're questions, but beginning in verses 3, and 4, David, then, begins, to pray. Perhaps he's asking these questions of the Lord in verse 1. Perhaps they're rolling around in his head and in his heart, and in verses 3, and 4 he clearly addresses God. He says in verse 3, "Consider, and hear, O Lord, my God. Lighten mine eyes lest I sleep the sleep of death. Lest mine enemy say I have prevailed against him and those that trouble me rejoice when I, am, moved." David did not get bitter. He did not give up. Rather he simply began to pray, and he says in verse 3, "consider." The Hebrew word is literally "[inaudible] me," and perhaps that is in contrast to verse 1 when he says, "How long are you gonna hide your face from me?" The essence of this psalm is David is saying, "Lord, look at me!" [While] also it says in verse 3, "Hear me," and perhaps that, is in contrast to verse 1 when he says, "How long will you forget me?" It's as if God has ear muffs on and he can't hear, and David is saying, Lord look, and listen! He's pleading with God. He says, "Consider and hear, O Lord. Lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death." Now that verse can be misunderstood.

Some have taken it to mean, that he is asking for illumination. That he's asking for understanding. That he's wanting to understand what he's going through. That's not quite what's happenin'. The little phrase, "lighten mine eyes," is used in the Old Testament, of not, illumination, but renewed strength. [And for] some whether it's the faith of a man who was right on the verge of death, and they revived him and it is said that his eyes, were enlightened. In other words just before he died the eyelids were heavy. They were about close. He was about to drift off into the sleep of death. That's what David is saying here. It's not that he's asking for understanding. He's asking for, strength that he not die. As a matter of fact he says in verse 4, "Lest mine enemy say I have prevailed against him, and they that trouble me rejoice when I am moved." If you don't do something, he would say, I am going to die. Now, in David's day, that may have been literally true, if the background, is Saul's pursuit of David. When, when he found him, he could have literally killed him.

20:22 That's not so much our problem today, but I can say I have talked with many, eh, [inaudible]. That's the word they spell. As a matter fact, just in the last several weeks, I have, talked with two and heard of a third, who said, in one case a fella said to me I felt like running my car into the bridge. Another woman said I just feel like dying and ending this whole mess. I heard of another, he said, why don't I just end it all. Put everybody out of their misery. And all three were Christian. That's the way you feel. When there's a problem you can't solve and it lingers long, and you think God [inaudible] and he doesn't act. And David says, "Lord hear me lest I die!" He says in verse 4, "Lest my enemy say, I have prevailed against him, and those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved." Lord if you don't do somethin', then they're gonna compose comedies out of my tragedies. They're gonna laugh. What I'm gonna do? And that's the

way God's been against you. Lord, do somethin'. And then let me just say in passing, before we move on. If you look at the passage, David, [undergoes] an excruciating problem, but he's fighting. Someone has said you need to resolve, never to be done, when you feel God is dead. David didn't. David said. Now in these first 4 verses, he is lamenting, he is praying, he's cryin' out, he's painting the picture of his problem, and then all of a sudden in verse 5, he says this, "But, I, have, trusted, in thy mercies. My heart shall rejoice, in your salvation. I will sing unto the Lord! Because He, hath dealt bountifully, with me." All of a sudden, David knew from praying *to* God, he had [inaudible] his confidence, in the Lord. He says in these last 2 verses, I don't care, what happens, and it does not matter to me how, I, feel. I, am going, to trust, God. That's the point, of verse 5. I have trusted, in, thy, mercy. The Hebrew word "mercy" here is a, [whole] word, from the New, in the Old Testament. It can mean, goodness. It can mean, kindness. Another Hebrew prof. [once] who enjoyed this word perhaps as much as any of the Old Testament in his life, had translated, "[inaudible]." He is saying, I have trusted in God's goodness. I have trusted in God's kindness. I believe that God, had the [loyal] kind of love to me. He is merciful to me. He is gracious, and I'm going, to trust him, in spite of everything you've read in the first four verses.

[23:57](#) And that's *the* point, I was to make this morning. When you feel God has forgot, and when you feel God has forsaken. When your own plans fail. When your situation and circumstances seem like they're going to overcome you and prevail, what you must do at that point, as much as at any point in your life, is trust, God. You see the simple reality is that, God apparently, sometimes, does, hide his face from us. There's several references to that in the Old Testament. One example, Isaiah, verse, chapter 8 verse 17 says, "I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth his

face from the house of Jacob, and I will look, for him." Isaiah several times, talks like that. Job is perhaps the classic biblical illustration. You read Job chapter 1 and you discover, that, he was a wealthy man, and upright. These were not chastisements because of some sin. They were not punishments because of some, wickedness or evil. Job was upright in heart, and yet he loses his possessions. Then he loses his children. His own wife ultimately advises him to curse God and die. His friends have given him all kinds of erroneous counsel. Job's, whole, world, fell, apart, and yet in the midst of that kind of devastation, Job said, "Though, he slay me, yet, will I trust him."

26:15 Now hear me this mornin'. Please, hear me this mornin'. The bottom line in the Bible is, faith. Are you going to trust God? Perhaps this is an extreme case. Most of you aren't going through the kind trial David's going through, in this passage, obviously, but the lesson, is critical. It's the bottom line in the Bible is we must, trust, God. That we must not depend upon our feelin's. That we must not just look at our circumstances. We must look in his word, and trust him, no, matter, what! Though he slay me, yet, will I trust him. That's what you're gonna have to have if you're gonna make it. What kind of fool is he! You're gonna make it spiritual. David conceded. He says in verse 5, "My heart shall rejoice in thy salvation." It could be translated, matter of fact many do translate it, "I am, rejoicing, in thy salvation." That he has made up his mind that he's going to trust God. He's gonna depend on the Lord no matter what, and now he says I'm going to rejoice. That's a choice, and Abraham Lincoln, he said, "A man is about as happy, as he chooses, to be." If you are trusting the Lord, you can make up your mind, to rejoice, and you can rejoice. The apostle Paul was in prison. He was facing the possibly, of having his head severed from his body! And yet he wrote the little book of Philippians and in [14] chapters

he says 18 times something about, joy and rejoicing. Now only a Christian can do that, and only a Christian, who is trusting the Lord, can do that. So David said I'm trusting the Lord and I've made up my mind. I'm gonna rejoice!

28:46 Couple of weeks ago, I was given a tour, of the largest jail in the free world, the Los Angeles, County, Jail, but they [inaudible] were to talk about it. I guess they assumed there're bigger jails in the Communist world. The chaplain, talked with us, and, the police lieutenant sorta [inaudible]. Within the course of the, tour, the chaplain said, the head chaplain said, "I make up my mind that this is gonna be a good day, and I'm gonna rejoice in it," and that was in the context of, pressure, and stress. For whom the context of the conversation where, the trust, the negativism, it's so bad, it gets to them and they don't last very long working there, and he'd been there many years. He said, "The way I've made it, is I just make up my mind. This is going to be, a good day!" Now friends, that's, Bible Christianity. I'm gonna get up in the mornin', and I'm gonna decide before this mor--I mean--before this day ever starts, this is the day, the Lord hath made. I will rejoice and be glad in it. Now I will guarantee you, not everything's gonna go your way. The whole thing's rigged against ya, [hurting] your own wicked heart. So you just need to make up your mind, that no, matter, what happens! And no matter, how I feel! I, am going, to trust, the Lord! And that means, I'm going, to rejoice! So when somebody sees you, and you, and they say, "How are you?", and you say, "Fine, under the circumstances."

[Audience laughter]

What are you doing under there? I thought you were in the heavenlies! If you grew up and lived with that point of view, and only when you doubt *that* point of view, then you have the confidence, and the assurance, that God is in control, and all things, work together for good. David ends this time, by saying, "I will sing unto the Lord! Because he, hath, dealt, bountifully with me." By the time we get to verse 6, the rain is over. The time for singing has come. The birds come out. The psalmist clears his throat for song. From one who said while the thunder and the lightning were still raging around him, David sang, his song, of praise. Luther said, "While Satan rages and roars about him, he meantime, sings, quietly, his little psalm." You see if you trust him, and you're rejoicing, there'll be music. If you're trusting. If you're rejoicing in the Lord, then he will turn your midnight, into music. That's what happened to Paul. He was in jail. He just received the beatings. There were welts on his back, friends! There were open wounds! He was bleeding! But he and Silas were singing. [But] you can only do that, 'cause you're trusting in the Lord! And if you're rejoicin'. Follow me for [inaudible]. This psalm opens with a sigh, and it ends, with a song, and what is in between? The key, in between, is the little verse, the little phrase in verse 5, "I, have, trusted, in thy midst."

**33:38** Aaah. I wish I were eloquent enough. I wish I somehow had the power to zip open your brain and pour in to it truth and zip it back up. You're gonna need it. If not today, tomorrow, and if not this week, next week. Matter fact, I think that what it's all about, we have ta learn, that no matter what happens, we're gonna trust the Lord. Let me conclude. I suggest there are three different people that need this truth. In the first place I believe, new Christians need to hear this kinda thing. In the number of years that I have, known the Lord, and, served him. I have seen case after case where God saves somebody, particularly a young person, and then, God it seems,

did things for that young babe, that he wouldn't do, for an old Christian. You ever notice that? Matter of fact some of us get jealous.

[Audience sigh]

Now, I can't prove this, but I have a hunch, that God does that deliberately, to confirm, himself, to new believers. That time, and time, and time again, what I had seen, is that this new believer sensed the presence of God, like, no one else in the congregation. God answers the prayer like no one else I knew and then all of a sudden, God jerks the rug out from under him, as if to say, "That I gave you some experiences, and I gave you some emotion, but ya can't trust experience, and ya can't trust emotion. You need to trust me! And you need to trust me no matter what happens." A young Christian, new Christians, need to hear this. The second group I think that need to hear this, are suffering Christians, and I think that's the case of David, and particularly Christians, who are suffering, over a long period of time, which is the case of this psalm. How long? How long? How long? How long? You need to know this truth to give it to people, who are going through that kind of experience. Peter said, "Don't think it's strange, that the fiery trial should come upon you." Fire burns, folks. Fire burns. There are trials in which believers get burned, and they need to know, that they have to trust God.

**36:46** I think the third group that needs to hear this, are simply faithful Christians, who might not be new in the faith, and they might not be, suffering at the moment, but I just, think that, our relationship with the Lord is personal, and in any relationship with any person, has its ups, and downs. Not all mountaintop, but some valley and some mountaintop. It's the best illustration in

Cocoris: When God Forsakes

all of the Bible of the Christian relationship with Jesus Christ, is marriage. I know most of you are not married, but, you've had boyfriends and girlfriends, and you know what I'm talking about when I say there are those moments that I just can't [inaudible].

[Audience mild laughter]

The full moon out, and [then] no clouds, and the stars and, there's the [patter, patter, patter, patter, patter], better, better, better, again.

[Audience laughter]

I don't never [inaudible] and you get irritated and [nonsensical vocalization]! Well, well as I read my Bible I think that's what it's like to walk with the Lord. I mean there were times when, the men of God fell prostrate on their face before him, and worshiped him and praised him and said they were nothin' before him, and there were other times, when they, said, [inaudible] outta here. I'm sick of it!

[Audience mild laughter]

Moses said that. Jonah said that, and Elijah said that. Now you just need to know, that life has its ups and downs, and so does the life with Jesus Christ. There are times when the apostles were on the mount of transfiguration, and there were times when they were on the sea, tossed to and fro, on a boat. What God is trying to seek out, is that we have to trust him! Whether we're on the

mount of transfiguration or whether we're on the stormy sea. The bottom line in the Bible, is Lord, I, have, trust! And though you slay me, I'm gonna trust you. Amen?

[Audience responds, "Amen"]

38:54 I'll never forget, being a student, in college, and hear a friend of mine, talk about an experience he had. I don't remember all of the details, but, if my memory serves me correctly, em, group called Campus Crusade for Christ had, just begun, and, he had joined the group and I believe he was on the campus of UCLA, but it may have been another one. An-ah, with very little trainin', and, no background in this sort of thing, they sent him into, a fraternity house. He hadn't heard Dr. Gosselin.

[Audience laughter]

So he wasn't prepared for what he was about to experience, and evidently a group of intellectuals got a [hold] of him, and turned him every way, but loose. They asked him every question, that he couldn't answer. He was mentally, exhausted. On top of that, the whole experience, was draining, spiritually, because here he'd been in the confines and context of a Christian school, then he'd been thrust out to that, den of wolves, and lions and, bears and, all of his spiritual resources just seemed to go straight down the drain. That when you're drained mentally, spiritually, that effects you physically, and emotionally. As I recall he said it was some, time after midnight, and he walked out of that dorm, and he said, "I was..."

[Cocoris vocalizes popping bubble sound]

...and there was nothing left. They had demolished me. As I looked up in the sky," he said, "Lord, humph, I don't feel, anything, and I don't have any answer. I wasn't [inadible]. I can't answer their objections. I can't feel a sense of presence. It's nothin'." I've never forget that fella since, but I looked up, toward heaven and said, "Lord, I'm gonna believe you. No, matter, what."

41:58 That's the message of this passage of Scripture. That's what David said. They found scribbled on the wall, in a Nazi prison camp, written evidently by a Jew, this. "I believe in the sun, even when it is not shinin'. I believe in love, even when feeling it not. I believe, in God, even, when he is silent." Let's pray. Our Father, we thank you, that you have given us of your word. You have given us of your Holy Spirit, to enlighten our minds, to empower us to do what you've asked of us. But Father we must confess that there are times when we don't understand. There are times when we don't sense, even your Spirit. So I would pray this mornin', that you would teach all of us, to trust you, no, matter, what. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.