

**EVANGEL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (PCA)
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Sunday Worship 8:30 AM and 11:00 AM
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Feelings!

It has been said that wise parents give their children two lasting things: roots and wings. To get from the first to the second is the challenge of parenting. Many of us have been weathered in the process. We remember the affections of our heart while holding our newborn close and feeling that soft skin and pondering the future. We remember struggling fourteen or fifteen years later to find the balance between providing roots of guidance on the one hand and space to grow on the other. We understand that both neglecting our children and providing too much support can delay maturity.

We too are children in process of maturing. Our heavenly Father's care varies with age. He expects the more mature among us to gratefully acknowledge that we are still totally dependent on Him. We can't even take a breath or a step without Him. God wants us to depend on Him, but He also wants us to trust Him when we have little or no sense of His presence. He wants us to develop and use the wings of Faith He has given us. "The righteous shall live by Faith (Romans 1:17) and without Faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6). Those times when God steps into the shadows can be times of greatest spiritual growth. C.S. Lewis has written, "God has the power to be sensibly present to human souls in any degree He chooses and at any moment. But the irresistible and the indisputable are the two weapons which the very nature of His scheme forbids Him to use.

He, at times, leaves us to stand up on our own legs—to carry out from the will alone duties which have lost all relish. The prayers offered in the state of dryness are those which please Him best. The cause of hell is never more in danger than when a believer, no longer desiring, but still intending, to do God's will, looks around upon a universe from which every trace of God seems to have vanished, and asks why He has been forsaken, and still obeys."

These times of spiritual dryness must be seen and seized as opportunities for the self discipline of faith. We must not wait for God to give us the desire to "Be about my Father's business." We must get past the inclination to wait for the "Want-tos" and "Feel goods" of obedience. Too often, we say, "Okay, I'll do it, but not now. I'll do it when I get around to it. Don't worry, it will get done. I'll pray later. I'll spend time in the scriptures later." But we are often waiting for God to move us, to change our hearts.

Jesus understood by the age of twelve what it meant to be about the Father's business. He was determined to finish the work God had given Him to do. He had to continue when there was no encouragement of friends and relatives and no good feelings. He was tested alone, without the comforts of home, isolated in the Judean wilderness under severe conditions, in the presence of angry religious leaders and with the rising shadow of a criminal's cross.

We too must walk through the valley of the shadow where our inner world is drab and cold and empty, but we must not think that such dryness is permanent. We must always keep in mind that God's promises are true no matter what we feel or can't feel. The eternal life He promised is still our possession and He is still with us. We are not alone. The way we feel seldom reflects the way things are.

Martin Luther wrote a poem about this. He too struggled with depression.

*For feelings come and feelings go,
And feelings are deceiving.
My warrant is the Word of God:
Naught else is worth believing.
Though all my heart should feel condemned
For want of some sweet token,
There is One greater than my heart
Whose Word cannot be broken.
I'll trust in God's unchanging Word
Till soul and body sever;
For, though all things shall pass away,
His Word shall stand for ever.*