



Links Players

Adversity - Abandoned?

Will the Lord spurn forever and never again be favorable? Has his steadfast love forever ceased? Are his promises at an end for all time? Has God forgotten to be gracious? (Psalm 77: 1-9, ESV)

Most everyone will readily admit that their swing has abandoned them at some point. Not that we abandoned our swings, but our swings abandoned us. When we talk like this, we personify the swing. It feels like a personal betrayal!

Like an old flame, 'the swing' just ups and leaves us. Without explanation, what we have worked so hard to hone and refine goes AWOL.

We were going along nicely, and then that 'butter fade' became a 'double-cross.' Darn! We search the memory banks, looking for the right swing thought, and find nothing. We attempt a mid-round fix only to complicate the problem exponentially.

You are one under through six. You thread the needle with your tee ball on seven, the toughest hole on the course. With a seven iron in hand, you inexplicably 'lay the sod over it.' Your heart sinks.

Then, an intrusive thought arrives: "Am I like Ian Baker-Finch?" Will my swing ever return? For a brief second, the thought of never finding your form again weakens you in the knees. You feel abandoned.

Feeling abandoned by your swing is a nightmarish thought. Much worse, feeling abandoned by your Creator and Redeemer, you are inconsolable. We know that Jesus promised his followers that he "will never leave nor forsake them," but it surely feels like he is nowhere to be found.

Throughout Scripture and the church's history, many who have committed to serving Jesus Christ have confessed to feeling abandoned by Heaven. Being abandoned and feeling abandoned is not the same, especially when it comes to Christ's commitment to his own.

As is often the case, God will play a game of "Cosmic Hide and Seek." He will momentarily seem absent in order to intensify our longings for him. He is wooing us to search more deeply. Sadly, we often mistake this as abandonment.

At other times, we mistake a sense of his absence for his frown or disapproval. This is not always the case. Of course, when we continue in willful sinfulness, we sense a loss of fellowship, but this cannot be mistaken for abandonment.

Many of us know the deep pain of being abandoned by a parent, a spouse, an employer, or a close friend, but we can eternally count on this: God the Father will never abandon his own. Even though this is subjectively thinkable, it is nevertheless objectively impossible.

When we enter those 'dark nights of the soul,' and it seems that God is a million miles away and utterly indifferent to our pain—be it mental, physical, relational, or vocational—we must trust that God is attentive to the cries of his people and is ever eager to stand with us in and through our adversity.

Though invisible to the naked eye, Christ, the Warrior King, always stands by our side.

Prayer: Open my heart to sense the "felt nearness" of Christ the King.

READING: Psalm 77

1. Remember an important time when you were excited to play, and your golf swing abandoned you. What was your 'go-to' fix? Did it work? Laugh and cry together!

2. After reading Psalm 77, contrast the shift in tone/mood in verses 1-9 with verses 10-20. What does the Psalmist do to calm his soul? What historical event does he rehearse and why?

3. Application: How might this strategy work for you in those "dark nights of the soul?"
