

SBC – Jan. 28, 2024

Psalm 13 (NKJV)

“How Long?”

Psalm 13 (NKJV)

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

David is the author of this Psalm.

When David wrote he often wrote intentionally for corporate worship. The Psalms were essentially SONGS. This Psalm is addressed to the “**Chief Musician**” which may have been a leader of choirs or musicians in David’s time (cf. 1 Chron. 6:33; 16:5-7; 25:6). It’s almost as though David anticipated that the experiences he was going through were going to be used of the Lord in a much broader way. This, of course, proved to be true as God inspired them, and they became part of the canon of Scripture.

Slide # 1

Psalm 13

Theme: “How Long?”

OUTLINE:

vv. 1-2 David’s Lament of “How Long?”

vv. 3-4 David’s Petition

vv. 5-6 David’s Declaration of Trust

1 How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me?

TWO of the most prominent laments of God’s are “**Why?**” (Ps. 10) and “**How long?**” (Psalm 13). Often we can’t understand the WHY of trouble and then also when we are in the throes of it we cry out “How long?”

David felt like he was at the end of his rope as he cried out: “How long?” Sometimes troublesome times seem to linger forever and we feel we just can’t take it any longer.

Give David credit he took his lament to the right place – he took it to the LORD. He hasn’t lost his faith but he is weary and discouraged. And he feels like God has forgotten him.

He cried out, “***Will you forget me forever?***” Is this never going to end? Is this going to go on indefinitely? This is how David felt in the struggle!

We don’t know the specific occasion when David wrote this Psalm but some think it may well have been during that LONG period of time when he was on the run from king Saul – running for years for his life. I mean this went on year after year.

David was very young when he was anointed to be the next king over Israel by the prophet Samuel (1 Sam. 16:13). Many scholars believe that David may have been as young as 15 years old when that happened. But then we read in 2 Sam. 5:4 that David actually became king when he was 30 years old. There was a lot of running for his life between the age 15 and age 30. It seems that for the better part of 10 years he was consistently running for his life – constantly in danger.

You can see that very possibly Psalm 13 could have been written during that long period of time. I mean if you are promised to be KING when you are 15 and 12 years later you are seemingly no closer to the throne, and are constantly being hounded and threatened – it is easy to understand how David began to wonder “how long” is this going to go on?

And often during this time David’s life was threatened.

Slide # 2

1 Samuel 20:3 (NKJV)

3 Then David took an oath again, and said, “Your father certainly knows that I have found favor in your eyes, and he has said, ‘Do not let Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved.’ But truly, as the LORD lives and as your soul lives, **there is but a step between me and death.**”

When you feel God’s presence you feel strong. You sense God is with you. It bolsters you up! But even for the strongest of saints, there are times we don’t sense God’s presence. We feel like we are kind of on our own in the wilderness. Of course, it is not true, but in the frailty of our humanity, we feel this way. David was a great man of God but he was also very human.

Of course, as I say, these are only feelings, but feelings are a real part of our experience. We can’t merely go by feelings – which is part of the lesson of this Psalm, but feelings are a real part of the human experience. The struggles we go through often involve “feelings”.

David then, for the second time, asks, “How long?” – “How long will You hide your face from me?” Someone said, “***This psalm might well be titled, ‘When God Hides His Face.’***”

When God hides His face represents a DARK time. We love the blessing of Numbers 6.

Slide # 3

Numbers 6:24–26 (NKJV)

24 “The LORD bless you and keep you;

25 The LORD **make His face shine upon you**, And be gracious to you;

26 The LORD **lift up His countenance upon you**, And give you peace.” ’

But what if a person doesn’t sense this? That is really hard!

God’s face represents His presence. And God’s face hidden means we don’t see His intervention. God warned His people in the OT that if they forsook Him that He would hide His face from them.

Slide # 4

Deuteronomy 31:17–18 (NKJV)

17 Then My anger shall be aroused against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and **I will hide My face from them**, and they shall be devoured. And many evils and troubles shall befall them, so that they will say in that day, ‘Have not these evils come upon us because our God is not among us?’

18 And **I will surely hide My face** in that day because of all the evil which they have done, in that they have turned to other gods.

And this came to pass. God hiding His face from Israel resulted in them being taken into captivity and eventually being scattered throughout the whole world. The times of the Gentiles is essentially a time when God’s face is hidden from Israel. It is a time when God’s direct miraculous intervention on Israel’s behalf is not overtly seen. So much so that a large majority of the Jews today no longer even believe in the God of their fathers. Where is God? They think they are a “self-made” people. Boy are they wrong!

The unseen arm of God has sovereignly and providentially preserved them as a people, and yet, to this day, He allows them to languish under the heel of the Gentiles during these times of the Gentiles. This will finally begin to come to an end in the Tribulation period when God's face will no longer be hidden.

This will happen when God intervenes in a HUGE and UNDENIABLE manner in the destruction of Gog and Magog. In that day even the Gentiles will get it – that God's face had previously been hidden from Israel because of their sin.

Slide # 5

Ezekiel 39:23–24 (NKJV)

23 The Gentiles shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity; because they were unfaithful to Me, **therefore I hid My face from them.** I gave them into the hand of their enemies, and they all fell by the sword.

24 According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions I have dealt with them, and **hidden My face from them.**” ’

We can understand God hiding His face from His people when they are in sin – but what about when they are not? What about when you have a situation like David's where there is no apparent sin in view?

Sometimes, even the godly saints go through a dark time when it feels like God's face is hidden from them – a time when they don't see His hand move on their behalf.

Even here God has His sovereign purposes. Job had an experience like this. Why? Where is God? How long? Sometimes, when a believer is going through a prolonged dark experience, it is easy to think that they must have sin in their lives, and that this is the cause. But maybe not!

Slide # 6

John 9:1–3 (NKJV)

1 Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth.

2 And His disciples asked Him, saying, “Rabbi, **who sinned**, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

3 Jesus answered, “**Neither** this man nor his parents sinned, **but that the works of God should be revealed in him.**”

Sometimes God has His own sovereign purposes in allowing these prolonged difficult times – to the end that He will ultimately use it for His own glory.

But the point is when we are in the midst of it – it isn't fun. We don't understand and we wonder "How Long?" "Where are You God?"

The absence of God's presence is HELL! Jesus took our HELL on the cross as expressed in this way.

Slide # 7

Matthew 27:46 (NKJV)

46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "**My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?**"

In the end, the lost will all be cast from God's presence. They will finally get what they want, only to discover the thing you supposedly want is really the last thing anyone would ever want. Jesus will say to the lost, "depart from Me".

Slide # 8

2 Thessalonians 1:9 (NKJV)

9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction **from the presence of the Lord** and from the glory of His power,

Praise the Lord believers will never know the real experience of hell, but a little taste of it is when in the throes of a great struggle we don't sense the presence of God. We don't sense His touch. We don't see His intervention. He seems distant and hidden. That is a terrible experience. That's where David was.

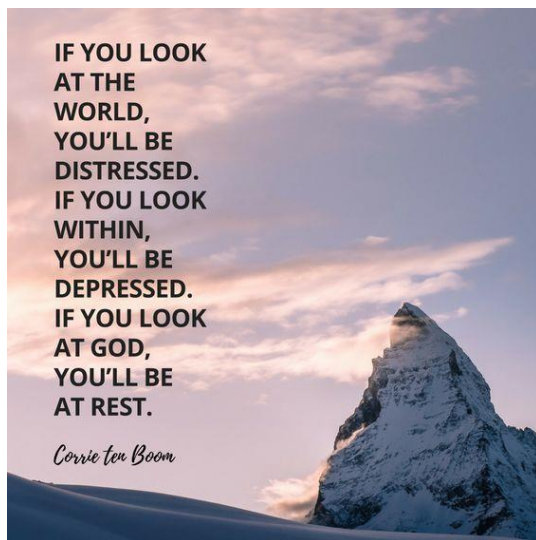
2 How long shall I take counsel in my soul, Having sorrow in my heart daily? How long will my enemy be exalted over me?

For the third time David cries out, "How long?" – "***How long shall I take counsel in my soul?***" The sense is that David just keeps working this through in his soul on his own day after day and yet with no relief. He says, "***Having sorrow in my heart daily?***"

Haven't you been through this: Something really HEAVY is on your heart and you muse over it day after day without any relief. There is no end in sight.

Note David did not ultimately find the answer INSIDE himself. He was trying to work it through but to no avail. Verses 1-2 are David recounting His struggle with the problem.

Slide # 9



But David came to look to the LORD. In this Psalm David was there now. He is looking to God. He isn't feeling it yet, but he is looking to God and in this he will turn a corner as we will see.

But then he brings up a fourth "How long?" – "How long will my enemy be exalted over me?" Your enemy is typically one who **hates** you and desires that bad things come upon you.

David had his loyal supporters but he also had his enemies. And right now they had the upper hand. Right now, they were exalted over him. And David wonders HOW LONG is God going to allow this to go on? ***"Will you forget me forever?"*** He believes God is there, but why is He waiting so long to intervene? That is really hard!

There is a lesson here. We can't go by mere feelings. We have to go by faith. We cannot allow ourselves to be ruled by feelings. Now this is easier said than done – and we are all human.

And there is a balance. God made us feelings and all. They are indeed part of our human experience and God does use them. But we cannot allow them to rule us. We cannot trust our feelings as the ultimate reality. We have to come back to God and the Rock of His Word. We live in a fallen world and our feelings are affected by our fallenness. Feelings can be very deceptive. But God is greater than our feelings.

Slide # 10

1 John 3:20 (NKJV)

20 For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.

After expressing to God exactly how he was FEELING – and it is okay to do this – as long as we do it reverently. It seems to me God appreciates transparency. He already knows our hearts. We just need to pour it out before Him. That is what David did.

After pouring out his lament David then prayed specifically. He had a specific request. It is good to pray specifically.

3 Consider and hear me, O LORD my God; Enlighten my eyes, Lest I sleep the sleep of death;

Consider and hear is the sense of “Consider and answer me”. David has gone a long time with the sense that God was not responding – so he is pleading for God to actively answer. He is desperate for God to respond.

And he specifically asks for God to enlighten his eyes. This request for enlightenment is understood in a couple of different ways. Some understand this as a request for insight that will help him in this situation.

But in context it more likely has the idea of asking for strengthening and reviving encouragement which would brighten his whole countenance (cf. 1 Sam. 14:29; Ezra 9:8; Job 33:30; Ps. 18:28). And really, what he is desiring is that God would deliver him from a life-threatening situation – which is like a DARK cloud of discouragement over him at the moment. He says, ***“Lest I sleep the sleep of death”***.

It is pointed out that God often waits until our prayers are desperate before He answers. God wants us to be desperate for Him. He wants to be wanted in that way.

Hard times have a way of driving us deep into the breast of God. Desperate prayer looks passionately to God. It puts God in first place and seeks Him above all else. This kind of praying moves the hand of God.

Slide # 11

James 5:16 (NKJV)

16 ... The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

Although David had all kinds of emotions in his “wilderness” experience he did ultimately trust God to direct his steps.

Slide # 12

Psalms 31:15 (NKJV)

15 My times are in Your hand; Deliver me from the hand of my enemies, And from those who persecute me.

What a great truth! Our times are in God’s hands. No matter what our feelings may be. The truth is that God sovereignly controls our destiny.

4 Lest my enemy say, “I have prevailed against him”; Lest those who trouble me rejoice when I am moved.

David was concerned that he might die (v. 3) and concerned that if the enemy prevailed over him that they would gloat and celebrate.

Even though David was concerned how this might make him look; in the BIGGER picture this would really make God look bad. After all it was God who had David anointed to be the next king. If, for whatever reason, David was not able to be the next king, then it would mean that what God had revealed through Samuel was not true. That would really make God look bad. This is the greater concern. That is unthinkable!

And so thinking it through David comes back to his faith! Time and time again in the struggles of life – this is where we must come back to.

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

The little word “But” indicates a transition from fear to faith and from questioning to claiming God’s promises. -**Warren Wiersbe**

Here is the KEY. After grappling within himself day in and day out about this miserable situation David finally resolved to TRUST in God's mercy. Faith honors God and God honors faith.

The Hebrew word "*hesed*" (translated here as "mercy") is a rich word that combines various nuances such as unconditional love, generosity, and enduring commitment. It is translated as "loyal love", "faithful love", "lovingkindness", "unfailing love", or "steadfast love". This word "*hesed*" is closely tied with God's covenant commitment to His people and has therefore been translated as "covenant love".

Slide # 13

Deuteronomy 7:9 (NKJV)

9 "Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments;

Psalms 89:28 (NKJV)

28 My mercy I will keep for him forever, And My covenant shall stand firm with him.

Slide # 14

Nehemiah 1:5 (NKJV)

5 And I said: "I pray, LORD God of heaven, O great and awesome God, You who keep Your covenant and mercy with those who love You and observe Your commandments,

Daniel 9:4 (NKJV)

4 And I prayed to the LORD my God, and made confession, and said, "O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments,

Slide # 15

Hesed describes a sense of love and loyalty that inspires merciful and compassionate behavior toward another person. *Hesed*, found some 250 times in the Old Testament, expresses an essential part of God's character. The core idea of this term communicates loyalty or faithfulness within a relationship. Thus, *hesed* is closely related to God's covenant with His people, Israel. As it relates to the concept of love, *hesed* expresses God's faithfulness to His people.

One of the best definitions of hesed is “faithful love”. Because God is faithful David put his trust in the LORD. He is worthy of our TRUST! He knew what God had promised and he resolved to trust in the character of God. God is faithful to fulfill what He has promised – no matter how long it takes!

Someone has well said: **We need to stop studying the problems and start studying the promises.**

And this is where TRUST or FAITH comes in. Faith takes God at His Word. It resolves to trust God’s Word no matter what the circumstances may be; no matter how long the delay seems to take.

When things are bleak, we need to come back to God; we need to come back to our TRUST in our God because He is faithful! He will fulfill His promises. He can be depended upon.

And it is amazing how the resolve to TRUST in the LORD changes our whole perspective. David’s resolve to trust in the LORD set his heart to rejoicing in God’s salvation. He believed God would deliver Him and therefore he celebrated God’s coming deliverance.

He believed God would make it happen – as promised. He did not know how, but He did know the faithful character of God and this is what he came to rest in.

In the depths of despair, we need to remember that God is a God of deliverance. This is what He specializes in.

Slide # 16

2 Corinthians 1:9–10 (NKJV)

9 Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not **trust** in ourselves but **in God** who raises the dead,

10 who **delivered** us from so great a death, and **does deliver** us; in whom we **trust** that He **will still deliver** us,

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

Rejoicing and singing go together. Singing often portrays joyful worship. It is one thing to sing; it is another to “***sing to the LORD.***” David affirmed that he would sing to the LORD as a worshipful expression of his faith.

“There is not half enough singing in the world...I remember a servant who used to sing while she was at the wash-tub. Her mistress said to her, ‘Why, Jane, how is it that you are always singing?’ She said, ‘It keeps the bad thoughts away.’” – **Charles Spurgeon**

David is determined to sing because God had dealt bountifully with him. Now through the eyes of faith he sees things differently. Before he was absorbed day in and day out abscessing about the problem, but now in TRUST he sees the providential hand of God in providing for him in a great way.

The idea of bountifully is the idea of overabundantly supplying with goodness and generosity. Instead of saying, “God where are You?”, he now sees God’s care in a BIG way. The perspective of TRUST sees things in a whole different light.

Once we have the proper focus on God we no longer zero in on just the problem, but now we can see the hand of God’s care in so many ways.

David asked for God to enlighten him in verse 3 and then resolved to TRUST in the LORD. And in response God answered that prayer. David began the Psalm overwhelmed by his feelings that God had forgotten him, but now in answer to that prayer he sees that God has in fact dealt bountifully with him all along.

He had been so focused on the problem that he had failed to see the providential hand of God involved each step of the way. Problems tend to cloud our minds to the truth of God. It’s part of the battle!

How important it is to realize that we don’t see everything – especially in the crucible of troubling times when it seems we are just barely holding on. It’s easy at such a time to agonize over “How long” is this going to continue? But we can’t trust our feelings! However, we can trust in the faithfulness of God. And that is the KEY!

Slide # 17

God is too good to be
unkind, too wise to be
mistaken, and when I
cannot trace His
hand, I can always
trust His heart.

Charles Spurgeon

How can we turn our sighing into singing. It starts by getting our FOCUS on God. As we get back to the truth of God's faithful character and TRUSTING in Him it turns our sorrow into singing.

It is good to know that God is in charge of the "How long?" and that He can be TRUSTED with it.

Life is about TRUST! That is the big idea. No matter the hardship it always comes back to the issue of TRUST. Am I going to trust God in this situation? That is always the issue.

Slide # 18

Proverbs 3:5–6 (NKJV)

5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding;

6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.

Psalms 56:3–4 (NKJV)

3 Whenever I am afraid, **I will trust in You.**

4 In God (I will praise His word), **In God I have put my trust;** I will not fear. What can flesh do to me?

Slide # 19

Isaiah 26:3–4 (NKJV)

3 You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, **Because he trusts in You.**

4 Trust in the LORD forever, For in YAH, the LORD, is everlasting strength.

Nahum 1:7 (NKJV)

7 The LORD is good, A stronghold in the day of trouble; **And He knows those who trust in Him.**

David had all kinds of internal struggles wondering about HOW LONG. He asked the LORD to encourage him and then resolved to trust in the LORD. His turning-the-corner response was to TRUST in God's faithful love and rejoice in His salvation.

No matter what we are going through that is a great prescription. Trust in the LORD and rejoice in His salvation. God help us to this end!