

Clearing the Air, Calling for Help, and Continuing in Worship (Psalm 13)

¹ How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever?

How long will You hide Your face from me?

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?

³ Consider *and* hear me, O Lord my God;

Enlighten my eyes,

Lest I sleep the *sleep of* death;

⁴ Lest my enemy say,

“I have prevailed against him”;

Lest those who trouble me rejoice when I am moved.

⁵ But I have trusted in Your mercy;

My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation.

⁶ I will sing to the Lord,

Because He has dealt bountifully with me.

David's Pain (Psalm 13:1-2)

Notice the repetition of *how long*. It stands out in the opening verses as the psalmist's way of expressing his, as yet, unmet hope of relief. He had been living *so long* in ongoing discomfort that his pain was erupting in a complaint to the Lord. How long, asks David, will I be forgotten, will Your face be turned away, and I live forsaken before my enemies?

- The Pain of Being Forgotten (Psalm 13:1; Exodus 2:24; Genesis 30:22; Genesis 40:14; Judges 16:28; 1 Samuel 1:11) - When David says **You forget me** he is speaking in a way that his Hebrew readers would recognize as an unfiltered complaint about not receiving practical help. David is not saying that God's memory is failing. He is being candid in communicating his disappointment in the Divine decision to leave him so long without real help. "How long, O Lord, will you leave me without practical help?"
- The Pain of Not Being Faced (Psalm 13:1; Psalm 11:7; Psalm 17:5) - David's chief desire is to be in face-to-face fellowship with God (Psalm 27:4, 8). His heart, summarily speaking, beats to behold God, longs to look at the Lord, and seeks to see Him. When he says **You hide Your face from me** David is giving vent to his deepest pain - *to not have God's attention*. To see God's face is to have the privilege of looking at the Lord and, most importantly, to have God look back at you - to see you with approving eyes (Leviticus 26:9; Exodus 2:25). "How long, O Lord, will you not take notice of me. How long will you intentionally ignore me?"
- The Pain of Being Forsaken (Psalm 13:2; Psalm 35:19; Psalm 69:4,9) - David is a man on a mission; he lives to lead the people well. This means leading them in wisdom and against adversaries of God and His heritage. Those who hate God hate David, the representative. It is especially comforting to know that God has your back when you are in trouble for being with Him. It is especially painful to not sense His support when suffering for His sake (Psalm 22:1; Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34).

Speaking my complaint *about* God to persuade others that He is not good is blasphemy; it is an attempt to (1) dissuade faith in Him, (2) denigrate His character, and (3) aligns me with His enemy the devil. Speaking my complaint *to* God is part of my relationship with Him. He already knows my grief; getting it out actually brings alignment between my conversation and my contemplations. When I share my disappointment with God I am operating with integrity.

David's Prayer (Psalm 13:3-4)

The distress of the shepherd king was not just in feeling forgotten. He was also dealing with the threat of death. His enemies were not content to malign the man of God; they would be satisfied only when they were able to take his life; the reference to the sleep of death is a Hebraism indicating belief in (1) life beyond the grave and (2) resurrection (John 11:11-15; Acts 7:57-60).

David is not against the eventual laying aside of his earthly tent in order to go and be with God. He is concerned that his cause, and by extension the reputation and goals of God, would be harmed if his enemies could say they had **prevailed against him**. Their rejoicing would be merely over the defeat of David but at a win in the war against God. Do this for me, O LORD my God, lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed against him." The enemies of David are first and foremost enemies of the LORD; David is hated because he is aligned with God.

⁹ Because zeal for Your house has eaten me up,
And the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me. (Psalm 69:9, NKJV)

The prayer of David is not a self-absorbed request for relief from his enemies; it is not about him. It really is about God. Can I say that about my prayers? That is, am I so aligned with God's will that my prayers for help are really about help for doing His will? Listen to Jesus!

⁹ In this manner, therefore, pray:

Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.
¹⁰ Your kingdom come.
Your will be done
On earth as *it is* in heaven. (Matthew 6:9-10, NKJV)

David's Perspective and Praise (Psalm 13:5-6)

Having cleared the air (Psalm 13:1-2) and called for help (Psalm 13:3-4) the psalmist is able to return to worship. Based on what? He returns to rejoicing and singing to the LORD based on two things:

- The Nature of God (hesed) - The character of God is not changing with the times. In His character is His mercy or loyal love (hesed) for his people. Circumstances can make it look like God is distant. However, the truth about who He is should help us to escape the gravity of dark meditations (Psalm 1; Philippians 4:8; 1 Timothy 4:15; Joshua 1:8-9). Focus on the unchanging goodness of God and you will be less susceptible to the roller coasters of world economics, family drama, and health issues. Praises to God should not be a function of how things are faring in the world.
- The Nurture of God - David has had a good history with God. In the tribulation of our lives we can forget to remember. We can stop regarding our history of God's great grace. His present and past goodness is the reason why we can keep singing even when things look bad.

In dark days your light is needed; let it shine! When it seems like God is not doing all he can to help you, let him know. Bringing your complaint to him is part of the relationship that you have with Him through Jesus Christ. But when it is all said and done, get back to glorifying the Lord in all you do.

Questions for Missional Community Discussion

1. In the midst of our issues with this global pandemic some of us have felt forgotten? What has caused you to feel forgotten, not faced, or forsaken? Based on Psalm 13:1-2 what can you do with your disappointment in your relationship with God.
2. David's prayers, on the surface, seem to be about himself. What are his real concerns? (Psalm 13:4; 69:9)
3. The strength to sing and the heart to rejoice are the outworking of our perspective. Looking at my circumstances will make me unstable and sometimes unable have a positive attitude. To steady my heart and promote a positive outlook in the midst of my mess what should I focus on? (Psalm 13:5-6)

Prayer

God, I admit my disappointment with how things have been going. In fact, I confess my frustration with Your handling of some things. Thank you for allowing me to be honest about how I feel and revealing yourself to be approachable.

Help me to align myself with Your will. And as I deal with the difficulties of today and tomorrow keep pushing me to remember how good You are and how good You have been to me.

Resources

Kidner, D. (1973). [*Psalms 1–72: an introduction and commentary*](#) (Vol. 15, p. 94). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Ross, A. P. (1985). [*Psalms*](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 801–802). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.