

“How Long Lord”
Psalm 13
(Preached at Trinity, December 13, 2009)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. The psalms enter the heart of the Christian experience. They delve into the desires of our heart, the intensity of our sufferings, and the joy of our union with Christ. God’s people have often found solace and comfort in these inspired writings.
2. As we read the psalms of David we find the longings of a believer as he goes through the journey of life. There are times in which God seems near and our hearts soar within us. There are other times, however, when God seems most distant and we cry out for Him. David often expressed these times when our soul cries after God.
Psalm 42:1-2 – “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. ² My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?”
3. As Psalm 13 opens David makes this cry:
Psalm 13:1 – “How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?”
 - A. These words often flow from our own lips, “How long, O LORD?”
 - B. We can bear all things. We can endure all suffering as long as God is with us. We can endure being forsaken by all people, as long as God is with us.
2 Timothy 4:16-17 – “At my first answer no man stood with me, but all *men* forsook me: *I pray God* that it may not be laid to their charge. ¹⁷ Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me. . . .”
 - C. When God seems distant, however, we fall into the deepest grief.
4. This psalm begins with a simple superscription; merely a note to the chief musician and a testimony of authorship – a Psalm of David
5. The psalm can be divided into three parts:
David’s Desolation - **Verses 1-2**
David’s Desire - **Verses 3-4**
David’s Delight - **Verse 5**
 - I. David’s Despair – **Verses 1-2**
 - A. These two verses are set up in typical Hebrew poetic parallelism
 1. How long will God forget
 2. How long will God hide His face
 3. How long shall I have sorrow in my heart - (lit. How long shall I be discouraged)
 4. How long shall my enemy be exalted over me –
(lit. How long shall I be defeated)

- B. David felt forgotten and abandoned – isolated from God
1. The expression “how long” implies it had been going for an extended period. It is in the extended trials that we sometimes feel abandoned. Andrew Fuller: “It is not under the sharpest, but the longest trials, that we are most in danger of fainting. In the first case, the soul collects all its strength, and feels in earnest to call in help from above; but, in the last, the mind relaxes, and sinks into despondency. When Job was accosted with evil tidings in quick succession, he bore it with becoming fortitude; but when he could see no end to his troubles, he sunk under them.”
 2. David knew his inability to face his foes by himself – he cries out to God, “How long shall I be defeated by my enemies.) But it didn’t seem to help.
 3. This brought intense sorrow in David’s heart
 4. He cries out for God to come in power and comfort
- C. There are times that God removes Himself from us
1. We will never be abandoned or forsaken
2 Corinthians 4:8-9 – “*We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹ Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;*”
 2. But there are times when God withdraws the fullness of His countenance from us.
 3. We do not hear much about this feeling of abandonment by God. It doesn’t seem right to us. We want to hear the refrain that has been added to “Alas, and did my Savior bleed.” “And now I am happy all the day. The truth is there are times when we can feel quite distant from God.
 4. The truth is there are times when God hides His face from us for a season. We read in the 1689 Confession , Chapter 5: Divine Providence: “The most wise, righteous, and gracious God doth oftentimes leave for a season his own children to manifold temptations and the corruptions of their own hearts, to chastise them for their former sins, or to discover unto them the hidden strength of corruption and deceitfulness of their hearts, that they may be humbled; and to raise them to a more close and constant dependence for their support upon himself; and to make them more watchful against all future occasions of sin, and for other just and holy ends.¹⁵
Chapter 18 – Assurance of Grace and Salvation: True believers may have the assurance of their salvation divers ways shaken, diminished, and intermitted; as by negligence in preserving of it, by falling into some special sin which woundeth the conscience and grieveth the Spirit; by some sudden or vehement temptation, by God's withdrawing the light of his countenance, and suffering even such as fear him to walk in darkness and to have no light, yet are they never destitute of the seed of God and life of faith”
 5. Sometimes through sin or neglect we fall into the valley of darkness where prayer is hard and our fellowship with our Father is difficult. David was a man after God’s own heart, yet he felt abandoned by God.

6. Remember, as I've stated before, the psalms reflect every element of the human condition.
Calvin called the Psalms: "'An Anatomy of all the Parts of the Soul;' for there is not an emotion of which any one can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror."
7. Sometimes during these times of intense spiritual trauma we tend to internalize it and fall into self-pity and fear. This can lead to despair. During these times we must press on in faith and cry out to Him earnestly
8. At first it would seem that David was falling into this trap but he never gave up seeking God - the only source of his help

II. David's Desire – **Verses 3-4**

A. David's desperation sent him to his knees

1. This wasn't David's last resort. He had been in prayer the entire time
2. He cries out, "Consider *and* hear me, O LORD my God"
"God, look upon me and have regard for me."
3. Notice David was praying as one in relationship with his God.
"O LORD my God"
4. David was praying as one accustomed to bringing his petitions to God. David had a relationship with God. This was how he prayed.
Psalm 7:1 – "O LORD my God, in thee do I put my trust"
Psalm 30:2 – "O LORD my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me."
Psalm 38:15 – "For in thee, O LORD, do I hope: thou wilt hear, O Lord my God."
Psalm 86:12 – "I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart: and I will glorify thy name for evermore."
5. David was asking God to rescue him from a desperate situation. He felt his enemies would break through at any minute and take his life. He cries out that his enemy will rejoice when he is finally dead.
6. The greatest aspect of David's prayer is his prayer for wisdom .
Verse 3 – "lighten mine eyes" – It refers to illumination, to be enlightened. In other words, David is praying that he might see his situation from God's perspective.

B. This must be our mind

1. We face difficult ordeals frequently – perhaps not as severe as David's ordeal but situations that can seem overwhelming.
2. We must seek the face of God and not give up. We must pray to our God – "O LORD, our God."
We must pray for understanding, submission, wisdom. We must pray that God might help us to see things from His perspective.
Isaiah 55:8-9 – "For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD. ⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Romans 11:33-34 – “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable *are* his judgments, and his ways past finding out! ³⁴ For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?”

- C. One of the great lessons we can learn from this psalm is perseverance in prayer
1. David pressed on in prayer even when God seemed most distant
Even when he felt forgotten by God, even when he felt God was hiding.
 2. Still David continued seeking the face of God
We saw this in **Psalm 5**
Psalm 5:1-3 – “Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my meditation. ² Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God: for unto thee will I pray. ³ My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct *my prayer* unto thee, and will look up.”
 3. The people of God must be constant in prayer
Luke 11:5-10 – “And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; ⁶ For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? ⁷ And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. ⁸ I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. ⁹ And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. ¹⁰ For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.”

III. David’s Delight – Verse 5

- A. As David persisted in prayer his despair was turned to delight
1. Notice the great change in David’s disposition!
Psalm 13:5-6 – “But I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation. ⁶ I will sing unto the LORD, because he hath dealt bountifully with me.”
 2. David’s feeling of abandonment was changed to trust
His cries were turned to rejoicing and singing
 3. The word for “mercy” is **רַחֲמִים** which refers to covenantal love.
David put his trust in God’s unfailing love.
 4. With this confidence David was filled with gratitude for all of God’s rich bounty. His faith was revived and His heart was changed from grief to joy.
 5. God’s ways are always perfect. His timing is always perfect. Even though it seemed like God was very distant from David, in reality He was right by David all the time.
- B. This must be the continuing disposition of our heart
1. Even when God seems distant we must remember His unfailing love for His people. In the end, we must remember nothing shall separate us from the love of God.

2. As a believer in Christ, you are a beloved child. The Holy Spirit enables us to cry out Abba Father – the cry of a little child.
3. With this confidence we can rejoice in God’s salvation and sing forth His praises.
James 5:13 – “Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.”
Psalm 28:7 – “The LORD *is* my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him.”

Conclusion:

1. What is it that brought David from such misery, desolation, and despair to rejoicing and singing? What accounts for the change?
 - A. David committed himself to God in prayer.
Psalm 13:3 – “Consider *and* hear me, O LORD my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the *sleep of death*;
 For how long? As long as it takes.
 - B. David trusted. He rested upon God.
 - C. David remembered. What did he remember?
 - a. He remembered the wonderful love of God – does God love you?
 - b. He remembered the wonderful deliverance of God – has God delivered you?
 - c. He remembered how bountifully God had dealt with him – has He dealt bountifully with you in past? Shall He not be bountiful with you in the future?
Psalm 77:11-12 – “I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember thy wonders of old. ¹² I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings.”
2. It may seem dark. It may seem like God has forsaken you. But don’t forget His infinite love for you. He will not forsake you forever.