



## Psalm 13 - Prayer for Deliverance from Enemies

To the leader. A Psalm of David.

### Introduction

This is an individual lament for circumstances where the worshipper is on the verge of despair, his powers of endurance spent.

### Psalm 13:1-2 - How Long?

The psalm begins with the question, 'How long?' repeated four times. The question is not asking for information but expressing the feeling of being unable to endure any longer. The questions move from God's apparent indifference (v.1) to the singer's circumstances of anguish.

- 1 How long, O Lord? Will you forget me for ever?  
How long will you hide your face from me?

### Psalm 13:1

How long, O Lord? It seems that every child of God has asked this question at one time or another, and that every follower of God has felt neglected by God, or at least that they have waited a long time for God to do what needs to be done. How long is the critical question. Often a person may grow weak and discouraged simply because of the length of their trials. They believe they could endure almost anything if they only knew when it would come to an end; yet sometimes God seems to choose to test someone to the point where they cry out how long? Yet he never does so beyond their endurance, as Paul confirms: <<***No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it***>> (1 Corinthians 10:13).

For God to **forget** and to **hide** his **face** from someone is to deliberately abandon that person, to withhold his loving care: <<*I say to God, my rock, 'Why have you forgotten me? Why must I walk about mournfully because the enemy oppresses me?'*>> (Psalm 42:9), and: <<*Why have you forsaken us these many days?*>> (Lamentations 5:20); it is not a description of God's own mental state. If psalms were theological treatises, they would affirm that God will not forget his people, as confirmed by: <<*For he who avenges blood is mindful of them; he does not forget the cry of the afflicted*>> (Psalm 9:12), and that the abandonment described here is only apparent. However, a song whose goal is to describe feelings does not need the same level of precision and detachment as a treatise.

There is a balance in life when it comes to feelings. Some people ignore feelings, and think that feelings should have nothing to do with their relationship with God. This is an extreme, because God has given people feelings as an expression of his image within them. Humans can feel anger, love, care, sorrow, and many other feelings, because God feels those feelings: <<*For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin*>> (Hebrews 4:15). In this sense, feelings are a gift from God and a sign that humans are made in his image. On the other hand, some live their lives ruled by feelings. They believe whatever reality their feelings present them. The problem with this is that, although they have feelings because they are made in the image of God, their feelings are affected by their fallen state. People cannot always trust their feelings because of this. In this sense, it was all right for David to feel these feelings, and good to take them to God, but he should never accept the reality of feelings as 'real' reality.

<sup>2</sup> How long must I bear pain in my soul,  
and have sorrow in my heart all day long?  
How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

### Psalm 13:2

How long must I bear pain in my soul? No wonder David was discouraged! Taking counsel in his own soul had led him to sorrow in his heart daily: <<*Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts*>> (Psalm 139:23), and: <<*Here the account ends. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly terrified me, and my face turned pale; but I kept the matter in my mind*>> (Daniel 7:28). When one is discouraged and depressed, the answer is not looking inside oneself, but in looking to and trusting in the Lord.

How long shall my enemy be exalted over me? This mentions the third way that David was depressed. David did not want to lose in any area he was attacked and see his enemy exalted over him:

- Firstly, in his relationship with God.
- Secondly, within himself.
- Thirdly, in regard to his enemies.

This was not a purely selfish desire. David knew he was the Lord's man, with a special calling to lead God's people. In this sense, David's enemies were the Lord's enemies, and enemies over the people of God. David's feeling that God had abandoned him was connected to his sense of depression.

The enemy is typically one who hates. Often in the Psalter, the hatred leads the enemy to want to do violence to the singer; in other places, as here, it leads the enemy to gloat over the singer's misfortunes: <<***O Lord, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked exult?>>*** (Psalm 94:3). Since the Psalms presuppose that their singers are faithful to the covenant, readers may safely assume that the enemy hates the singer's faithfulness.

#### Psalm 13:3-4 - Prayer for Help.

The singer calls upon God to intervene.

- <sup>3</sup> Consider and answer me, O Lord my God!  
Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death,  
<sup>4</sup> and my enemy will say, 'I have prevailed';  
my foes will rejoice because I am shaken.

#### Psalm 13:3-4

For God to consider and answer would be for him to relieve the singer's circumstances.

Some take the request give light to my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death to imply that the psalm originated during a severe illness; but while the words could apply to such a case, they are general enough to apply to a wider variety of situations, such as: <<***But now for a brief moment favour has been shown by the Lord our God, who has left us a remnant, and given us a stake in his holy place, in order that he may brighten our eyes and grant us a little sustenance in our slavery>>*** (Ezra 9:8).

My enemy will say. David knew one of the worst parts about losing to anyone is hearing them boast after they have defeated him. He did not want his enemy to rejoice when he was brought low: <<***O my God, in you I trust; do not let me be put to shame; do not let my enemies exult over me>>*** (Psalm 25:2).

### Psalm 13:5-6 - Reaffirming His Trust in the Lord.

Confidence in the steadfast love of God (v.5), as revealed in the covenant: <<*The Lord passed before him, and proclaimed, 'The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness'*>> (Exodus 34:6), leads to a trusting expectation of salvation and God's bountiful dealing.

<sup>5</sup> But I trusted in your steadfast love;  
my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.

### Psalm 13:5

But I trusted in your steadfast love. David, after his prayer, came to a place of confidence and trust: <<*Turn, O Lord, save my life; deliver me for the sake of your steadfast love*>> (Psalm 6:4). I trusted speaks in the past tense; it is as if David remembered that he really did trust God and he cleared away the fog from his sleepy eyes as God enlightened his eyes. At this place of discouragement, David could not trust in God's justice, or in God's law, or in God's holiness. Those things might condemn him because his feelings had made him not see clearly. However, he could always trust in God's mercy - a lesson for everyone!

Now, David was still in the realm of feelings, i.e. rejoice. However, he directed his feelings instead of having his feelings direct him, my heart shall rejoice. He instructed his own heart to get busy rejoicing!

Salvation here, as generally in the OT, refers to both physical and spiritual deliverance from danger. David clearly takes delight in the reality of his own salvation, a promise of God to those who faithfully serve him: <<*then he prays to God, and is accepted by him, he comes into his presence with joy, and God repays him for his righteousness*>> (Job 33:26), and: <<*It will be said on that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is the Lord for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation*>> (Isaiah 25:9)

<sup>6</sup> I will sing to the Lord,  
because he has dealt bountifully with me.

### Psalm 13:6

I will sing to the Lord. David knew rejoicing is wonderfully expressed in singing praise and worship songs. So, he would sing to the Lord. Singing to the Lord would both express his joy and increase his joy: <<*Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord: 'I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my might, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him,*

*my father's God, and I will exalt him>> (Exodus 15:1-2), and: <<I will give to the Lord the thanks due to his righteousness, and sing praise to the name of the Lord, the Most High>> (Psalm 7:17).*

Because he has dealt bountifully with me. As David thought about it, he had good reason to rejoice and sing because God had been good to him. If one would only take the time to think about it, every person on this earth has reason to rejoice, because in some way God has been good to everyone. What a transition! In the beginning of the Psalm, David was overwhelmed by his feelings, believed that God had forgotten him and was hiding from him. He had trouble with God, with himself, and with others. Yet now he saw how God had dealt bountifully with him. Because his eyes were enlightened, David could now see God's goodness, and what a change in perspective that was! Before God can enlighten the eyes of a person, they must agree that they do not see everything. They need to realise that their feelings are not giving them full and accurate information. However, if they will do this, and cry out to the Lord, he will enlighten their eyes and bring them from a place of despair to a place of trust, joy, and confidence in him and their situation!