

How Long, O God?

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Bible Verse: Psalm 13
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For approximately 20 years, our immediate family lived in the state of California while our extended family lived here in the Midwest. It was a 2,000 mile separation that we had from our parents and from siblings and cousins and all of that. And that was fine. The Lord gave us a good life while we were in California. I'm grateful for that. One of the things that we did was that we would travel back and forth every other year, sometimes more often we would make the drive in our big white van and come to the Midwest in order to visit our relatives. And it's a long trip, you know, 3-4 days, you know, when you're traveling with family. The destination made it worthwhile to do that but as you know, as you take a very long trip, sometimes you have to stop for rest. It's just the nature of the trip. You can't grind out 2,000 miles in a nonstop fashion and so it falls on the dad, or in our case more often, the mom in those days to say, "Hey, we need a break. We need to stop and get out and stretch our legs before we continue on in the journey." You all understand that, the nature of that is we traveled with six kids and so on. Here that's pertinent for what I want to do this morning. I made a last minute, not a last minute decision but a quick decision to do something different this morning than what we had planned and what's reflected in your bulletin.

As you know here in our church from the pulpit, we're on a long journey to build a Christian mind, and we've been at it for quite a while, a couple of months and there's more time to come, and that that destination is very much worthwhile and I'm very committed to getting to that point and traveling through all the mountains and valleys and plains that are necessary to lead us to that destination. But even as in a physical realm, there's time to stop and take a break and go to the rest area or see a particular scenic view. As a pastor, sometimes you have to make a judgment that maybe it's time to take a pause to get out and stretch our spiritual legs in a way that would help us. To build a Christian mind, especially as we're approaching it, requires sustained thinking, a lot of preaching on hard doctrine and difficult issues that aren't immediately apparent in order to get to the foundation that lays, you know, that it enables us to build a Christian mind. There's a lot of instruction. There's a lot of doctrine. There's a lot of polemic involved in it, you know, and refuting other teaching, and there's you know, that's all part of it. It's necessary. But as you're doing that, as you're driving down that extended road to a worthwhile biblical destination, life keeps happening, right? People are going through chronic trials or sudden change has come upon them. People are hurt by relationships, by circumstances, sometimes financial but the financial stuff is always secondary; you can get through

financial difficulties if relationships are good. You can get through financial difficulties, you can get through health difficulties if your heart is not discouraged and you're not feeling a creeping sense of despair over life circumstances that are making things very difficult for you. And the challenge for a pastor, at least for me, I won't speak for other pastors, I don't know what other pastors think about these matters, but the challenge for a pastor is that sometimes you just have a sense that the congregation as a whole would benefit if you would just pull off the road, stop, let us get out, look at some other things and take a short rest and to consider some things that would help us along the journey as we're moving toward the destination. And it's an interesting dynamic that goes on in my mind at least. There is no manual that tells you when it's time to do this. There is no one that's alongside you that can say today's the day to do that. You're kind of left with your own sense of judgment, your own sense of understanding and assessment as you try to walk with the Lord, and you're dependent upon the Holy Spirit for wisdom in the inner man to pull alongside and to do something different as you're moving in the broader general direction in which you need to go.

So today we're going to pull over at a spiritual rest stop that I trust will be a help and encouragement to many of you along the path of life, and I invite you to turn to Psalm 13 with me. Psalm 13 as we confront the reality, as we learn the ability to deal with chronic difficulties in the Christian life that have no obvious solution for which the Lord seems to tarry and delay his answers in an insufferable way, if I can put it that way, and the press of life and the discouragement that comes from the lack of change and the lack of seeming hope for any kind of turn in the circumstances, leads you to the kind of prayer that we find expressed by David, a man after God's own heart, as he writes in Psalm 13. Let's read it together or you follow along as I read. It's a brief Psalm, only six verses in our English text, and beginning in verse 1 we read this,

1 How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? 2 How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me? 3 Consider and answer me, O LORD my God; light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death, 4 lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed over him," lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken. 5 But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. 6 I will sing to the LORD, because he has dealt bountifully with me.

David is in an experience as he writes this Psalm that you and I can certainly relate to. He is despairing over a prolonged struggle that has sapped his strength, and as he has prayed and prayed, the circumstances have not changed. It seems as though God is ignoring his prayers, is certainly not intervening, is not bringing relief, and so he wakes up from day to day and the same grinding trial is upon him, the same opposition from man is pressing upon his soul, and it's hard. It's just hard. And I know that you know that by direct personal experience. If not now, from times in the past, if not then, in times in the future, beloved, you will. We live in a fallen world and we feel the effects of the curse and being a Christian does not exempt us from the sorrows and the difficulties of life. And yet when this Psalm closes, at the end of it David is singing and he is full of joy and so we're seeing

something that is kind of a synopsis, it's a compressed concentrated version of how to respond to trials, how to find the strength and hope in Christ that is available to us as we go through these, but we want to go through this, this morning, and to consider this a bit of a spiritual rest stop.

I've mentioned this before, it is a privilege, it is a blessing to be a pastor and to look out upon faces and to know as you see faces as well as I can see them when I'm not wearing my glasses, I have to choose between seeing your faces clearly or seeing my notes clearly and so I choose the notes. But to look out at your faces and to instantly know, I know something of the burden there. I know the heartache that's gone with family relationships in that particular place. I know the heartache that some have experienced over their past spiritual lives and feeling the weight of, you know, I squandered so much opportunity. I had opportunity and I squandered it and I wasted my life and now, you know, I'm toward the end of my life and I don't get to do it over again. We know collectively, we know what it's like to have children who suffer. We know what it's like to bury young ones that we have loved. We know what it's like to go through chronic illness with no seeming help in the process. We know what it's like to be betrayed by people that we thought were our friends. All of these things, beloved, are summed up and brought into play as we consider a Psalm like Psalm 13, and the reason that we want to come here, the reason we pull off at this particular rest area is that this Psalm gives us direction for our most grievous of sorrows and it helps us in ways, and it helps us in circumstances and in spiritual responses where most Christians would even refuse to go to even acknowledge the difficulty. You know, but it's not a Christian response to simply deny the existence of evil and difficulty in our lives, that's what Christian Scientists do, and it's an alternate reality that's not true. It's an alternate approach to life but it's not reality.

You know, we do suffer. We do feel the effects of pain and it is difficult, and James Montgomery Boice, one of my favorite pastors from a prior generation, he says this about it and I quote this just so you know, I quote this to give an invitation to those of you that are particularly discouraged and don't feel like there's anyone that you can talk to. James Montgomery Boice says this, he says, "If any of us should admit to such feelings of despair, many of our friends would look askance at us, shake their heads and wonder whether we are Christians. Isn't that true? Isn't that the chief reason why you do not talk to other Christians about many problems?" He says there's this spiritual veneer that we feel like we have to keep up, expectations from those around us, and to acknowledge the depth of our discouragement, to acknowledge that we don't have it all together, to acknowledge that we're hurting and confused and we find that it seems like our prayers are going unanswered, to express that level of vulnerability to many Christians, most Christians anyway, would open us up to rebuke. I know that by direct personal experience, and I imagine that many of you do also and so we live in a little bit of an isolation bubble where it's not easy for us to be able to open our hearts and to find help. And I'm not at all calling anybody to start sharing things with other people that you don't know that well. I don't think that's wise. You know, a stranger doesn't know the joys and the burdens of our heart, and so we do have to be discreet in who we say things to and what we say to them. I get all of that but what we're talking about here is not a horizontal involvement with others, what we're talking about here is a vertical response to the living

God, the God of our salvation, and to have a settled trust in the word of God gives us the power and the confidence to go to the word of God and say what would it say to me in circumstances like this, circumstances where I have blown it myself? You know, whether it's over something recent, you know, where you, you know, you responded in a way that you now regret within the past, you know, few weeks or whatever. Maybe it's a lifelong regret, you look back and you say, "You know what? I did everything wrong and now I see the effects of it and I see the sins of my youth being replicated in the lives of my adult children and it's painful to me to realize that I had a contributing factor to that." Well, what then?

Well, beloved, if wisdom, if it is a better part of wisdom to make us slow to share such things with men and to be that open and transparent with people that may or may not respond well, wisdom also makes us quick to look to Scripture to see what the word of God has to say and Psalm 13 is a place where we can open up our hearts before God and let the word of God respond and minister to us. Charles Spurgeon says this about Psalm 13. He says, "This Psalm is intended to express the feelings of the people of God in those ever-returning trials which beset them. If the reader has never found yet occasion to use the language of this brief ode, he will do so before long if he be a man after the Lord's own heart." And so we see from contemporary writers, we see from men in more distant history that this Psalm has something to say to us, that this Psalm identifies with us in our spiritual discouragement, our spiritual despair even. This Psalm identifies with us and we see the best men of God understanding and expressing that as well so that we do not need to be intimidated into silence by well-meaning perhaps but superficially minded people in our own day and age that are around us, people that have been conditioned by teaching that says, you know, if you have faith, you won't have problems, you know, God wants you to be healthy, wealthy and wise, you know, and if if you're discouraged, the problem is all on you and just the awful, just the awful sense of isolation and discouragement that that brings. You find yourself saying, "I just need someone to say a sympathetic word of encouragement to me. I just need someone to put their arm around me and say it's going to be all right. Trust in the Lord. He's going to be good to you. What you see today is not the ultimate outcome for you in Christ." And yet the reality is, is that these deep discouragements are hard for others to process, and it's easier to shift the blame to you and make you go away so the problem goes away from, you know, the so-called friends. But you know, I know what it's like to open my heart to someone I trusted, not talking about anyone within my family, but open up my heart to someone that I trusted to be dealt with roughly. You know, you open up a bruised, wounded heart to someone looking for some encouragement, some consolation, for some sympathy, for some help, for some useful counsel, and the response is like someone taking a coarse grade sandpaper and just rubbing it across that bruised and bleeding heart and it makes it worse. That's not what we're going to do today, beloved. That's not what we have in front of us here today. What we have in front of us here today is a sympathetic portion of the word of God that will bring encouragement to your soul and to give you a sense of confidence that the Lord is still with you, the Lord will bless you, the Lord will help you, the Lord does care, and that as a result of that, there is hope and even singing that is possible in the midst of these times.

Let's look at, first of all, at David's sigh of despair. His sigh of despair that opens this Psalm. David, as we see, is intensely discouraged as he writes Psalm 13, and if you read it slowly, carefully, you read it, you know, a few times in a single sitting, you can practically hear David moaning as he speaks. "O God, how long? How long? How long?" Well, the question that we would ask is what has provoked David to this depth of discouragement? Let's look at the first two verses here again just to set the stage before we comment on them, verses 1 and 2.

1 How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? 2 How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

And beloved, David's not the first writer of Scripture, or better stated he's not the only writer of Scripture to speak this way. You don't need to turn there, but in the book of Habakkuk you find the exact same spirit being expressed as the prophet opens his book. He says in verse 2, the prophet Habakkuk says, "O LORD, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you 'Violence!' and you will not save? Why do you make me see iniquity, and why do you idly look at wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise. So the law is paralyzed, and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; so justice goes forth perverted." How long? How long? You know, and just the fact that those passages and others like them are in Scripture is a great encouragement to me and should be a great encouragement to you if you're in the midst of long challenges and unanswered prayer, to realize that Scripture acknowledges that those seasons do exist in the spiritual life acknowledged by the writer of inspired Scripture. Here as we come to Psalm 13, we see David saying this four different times. How long? How long? Verse 2, how long? How long? And we don't need a long exposition of this, it's enough for us simply to recognize and to see that as David has cried out to the Lord in his distress, God has not yet provided the practical help that he needed in his difficulty and the more he prayed, the longer it seemed to go.

Again, Spurgeon said, "We have called this the how long Psalm." Three words, how long Psalm. He goes on to say with the sense of humor that only Spurgeon can bring to the matter. He said, "We had almost said the howling Psalm from the incessant repetition of the cry how long." David is howling out to God is what he's saying there, what Spurgeon is saying. David is howling out to God, "How long must this continue? I am in difficulty here." And so David is expressing concern over the fact that God has been silent in response to his prayers. He has prayed and the situation has not gotten better, perhaps it's even gotten worse.

And so why is David sighing out in despair? First of all, he's sighing out in despair in response to his silent God. He's asked for help and it hasn't come. Sometimes it's circumstantial help that is delayed. Sometimes it's matters of illumination and understanding of Scripture that is delayed and you work and you wrestle and you're confused and there's not an immediate answer to it. So God has been silent in response to David's prayers, and we go on and we see his suffering heart as well. God's delay has

burdened David's heart, and it's an inward struggle that he is describing here. It's not simply external circumstances. David would not in this Psalm, he would not have agreed with the hymn writer that said, "Now I am happy all the day." David says in verse 2, by contrast he says, "How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?" "God, I am crushed here. I do not know what to do. I am hurting. I have cried out and you have not changed the situation. You have not helped me. You've delayed." And what you have here is you have a man whose thoughts are tossing and turning within him. He goes back and you know what this is like and if you don't know what it's like, ask me and I'll tell you what it's like from my own experience, okay, of having the thoughts agitate and you've got a problem, you've got an issue, there's a difficulty and you rehearse the history that led up to it. You think through solutions and say, "That's not going to work. That's not going to work. That's not going to work." Sometimes you're dealing with people with hard, stubborn hearts that aren't responsive, that aren't receptive to your pleas. "O God, what's going to happen?" You've got loved ones in your family where you've shared the gospel with them and their hearts are hard and their ears won't listen and David is rehearsing this.

Martin Luther, the great reformer says this. He says, "David's heart is like a raging sea in which all sorts of thoughts move up and down. He tries on all hands to find a hole through which he can make his escape. He thinks on various plans and still is utterly at a loss of what to do." His God is silent. His heart is suffering. And yet it's more than just an inner turmoil that he's facing, he's also facing a surging enemy. As you look at verse 2, we've seen the inner aspect of it, "I'm taking counsel in my soul. I have sorrow in my heart all the day," and then it turns and there's a human element to it, there's an external human element to it and his surging enemy and his enemies are too strong for him. He says in verse 2, "How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?"

Now it's interesting here, there is no historical background for us to know exactly who David might be speaking about, exactly what the circumstance is, there's no historical background like that to help us identify what the particular occasion was of this Psalm. That gives it a broader application. It makes it a Psalm that's easier in many ways, then, for us to take and apply to our own situations, but somehow man is prevailing over David in an unrighteous way. Put it this way, you can look at it this way: his enemies are sinning against God and they are sinning against him. They are making life difficult for him. They are breaking his heart. They are just expanding it out to what the nature of life is. Some of you have people that are close to you that are just so hard, resistant and even hateful to you. "How long, Lord, must this go on? How long must this unrighteous pressure be brought upon my soul?" And with David, the situation is that David writes as a king over God's people, and so he has an enemy and it's threatening his position over the people of God and here the God who anointed him as king is nowhere to be found. He's afflicted internally. He's afflicted externally. Men assault him and God is inactive as shown by the reality of the providential continuance of the circumstances with no change to bring relief, no comfort to be found in his heart. No wonder he says, "How long?"

And beloved, let me just say this because I think it's important to say. The fact that he's saying how long means that this has gone on for a long period of time. Neither David nor

Habakkuk, who are godly men, would be praying this way after a day or two of discouragement, after a bad week. You know, the harvest came in low and so David's crying out like this. We don't have any sense of the time period but, beloved, what you and I need to understand is that God sometimes sends us afflictions and trials that last for a very long time, a very extended period, and as much and as desperate as we feel the need for relief, God sees fit to allow that to continue in our hearts, to continue in our lives. And it's only when we've reached the breaking point of saying, "I can't take this anymore," that the actual sanctifying process can actually start to take place. You know, if it was a trial, if it was a difficulty that we felt like we had control over, you wouldn't need a Psalm 13. If it was a trial that had just gone on for a little while but you can see the way that it's going to work out, you wouldn't need Psalm 13. What you need Psalm 13 for are those times where it is chronic, it is deep, it is difficult and there has been no change and, beloved, there is no prospect for change. There is no human explanation, there is no human way forward, this is an unsolvable issue from a human perspective, and you say, "If this is unsolvable then this is really bad because this really hurts."

That's what David was facing and I ask you, beloved, can you identify with him? Can you look on the writer of Scripture and say, "I feel for him. I've been there." Can you do it in reverse in the midst of your discouragement, can you say, "I see in this Psalm something that expresses what's in my heart"? You suffer in life, unrighteous men, unrighteous women slander you, make life difficult for you, hinder your hopes, hinder your aspirations, hinder your career, end your career. Spouse, a child, a parent puts the worst possible spin on things that you've said, holds it against you and won't let go and you long for restoration and you hold out your arms and you stretch them further and further, and you realize that you're reaching for air because there's no care, there's no response there. And you seek God and the situation gets worse? "How long? How long? How long? How long," you cry out. You watch for years as your loved ones push back against your efforts to care for them. I know many of you have been through that, are going through that. I don't have the heart to look up to make eye contact with you but you know. Scripture here is explaining and is showing forth emotions of your own heart, isn't it? How long will this go on?

Well, beloved, let's see how David responds. He stated things plainly. He set forth the case. He set forth the discouragement. Here's what we need to see, the temptation that's easy to fall into, to succumb to, and when you succumb to it it's really hard to get out of it, the temptation is to just yield to the despair and to say, "Apparently it's always going to be like this. I've prayed. Nothing's changed. This hurts. Man can't help me. I don't know what to do." And to just collapse and to stop even trying. The fact that you're here in the room today shows that whatever else is going on, you haven't given up completely anyway is a mark of the work of the grace of God in your life. But the key for us, while we can admit this honestly, the key is to not just stop there, to just stay there, but to say, "What do I do in response to this spiritual circumstance?" Well, we've seen David sigh of despair, let's look, secondly, at his summons for deliverance. His summons for deliverance. In the midst of his despair, David actually verbally requests help from God. He's asking for help from God. Look at verse 3. He says,

3 Consider and answer me, O LORD my God; light up my eyes, lest I
sleep the sleep of death, 4 lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed over him,"
lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken.

Now beloved, there is an approach to prayer that I have learned to detest. I really hate this, and so it's a privilege for me to help others see not to do this. There is an approach to prayer, you've probably had people come and say, "You know, I've got this problem. Pray that God would grant this specific solution. You know, I'm praying for God to send a financial windfall. I'm praying to God for an immediate healing. I'm praying that, you know, he'll do this or that." Beloved, there's a better way to pray, let me put it that way. Here in Psalm 13, what you're faced with, what David is facing is a situation where he does not see any possible human solution. It would do no good to go to David and say, "Here's the solution that you need to pray for," because he doesn't see a solution in it and our goal in prayer, our goal in prayer is not to say – this will shock some of you and that's okay – our goal in prayer is not to say, "God, I know how to handle this. I know what the solution should be so I ask you to do my solution to my problem," and to set it forth in that manner. That's not what David does. He does not figure out the solution in his own human wisdom and the cogitations of his own heart. He's taken counsel in his soul. He has sorrow in his heart and he doesn't know what to do. He doesn't know what the answer is and so he doesn't figure out a solution and ask God to give him that. His request is more direct, it's more basic, it's more profound. He says in verse 3, "Consider and answer me, O LORD my God." He's saying, "God, God, would you just pay attention to me and answer me? Whatever the answer is, O God, help me, answer me." He's asking God to respond to him directly whatever man or God chooses to do.

And there's an Old Testament example of this, you don't need to turn back there, but back in 2 Chronicles 20, King Jehoshaphat was facing difficulties. We don't need to elaborate on the context but he's facing enemies all around him and he illustrates what I'm talking about here as he's facing his enemies. He says in verse 12 of 2 Chronicles 20:12, and I've come to this verse so many times. The longer I go, the more I come here in the spirit of Psalm 13. He says, "O our God, will you not execute judgment on them? For we are powerless against this great horde that is coming against us." And here's what he says and this is the point of Psalm 13 that I'm making right here. Jehoshaphat prays to the living God, prays to the God that he loves and he says this, he says, "We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you." "God, I don't know what to do but I'm looking to you." That sweet place of dependence, of surrender, of humility. "God, I can't handle this. This is too much. It's too heavy on my heart, O God. I can't keep facing this with the same sense of discouragement. I don't know what to do. God, I don't know what to do. All I can tell you is I'm looking to you."

That spirit of trust and dependence, brokenness, utter humility, beloved, is a place where many Christians don't want to go. In the remnants of what Adam left behind for us, we want to be independent. We want to be cool. We want to have it all under control. We want the pride of saying, "I can take this. I know what to do here." Scripture leads us in a different direction in those times of discouragement and says, "God, I don't know what to do. I'm a helpless baby before you. I'm crying out. I can't feed myself. I can't change my

situation here." David calls out and he says, "God, God, consider me. God, answer me." In other words, he's saying, "God, pay attention! God, have a gracious attitude toward me in the midst of the sorrow and discouragement. God, just be gracious. Just listen. Just do something. Help me, whatever you do. And now God, that I have your attention, if you would only consider me, now that I have your attention, answer me. God, enlighten my mind, enlighten my heart with a divine perspective that will help me going forward. God, intervene before this crushes me completely. Intervene before this drains me of the will to live. Somehow God send help. I won't tell you what to do and besides my attitude in prayer is, 'Not my will but thine be done.' If I knew what to do, Lord, I wouldn't be praying to you. I'm dependent before you. I'm helpless before you. I lack any wisdom, so I'm asking you to supernaturally intervene and to help me and to work in my heart and mind to lead me, to guide me, to protect me. Be a shepherd to me here, Lord. I'm a lost sheep."

What you see here in Psalm 13, beloved, there is urgency in this Psalm. There is the language of sincere determination and David reminds God that if he fell before his enemies, it would be a disrepute on the glory of God. Look at verse 4 again, "lest my enemy say, 'I have prevailed over him,' lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken." It's not so much a personal concern, David is God's king and so his position makes God's answer urgent for God's own glory. If they boast over David, it's as if God himself has been defeated, his glory will be tarnished. And so it's not simply a self-centered prayer that he makes here, it's, "God, you know, your dealings with me reflect on your own glory and so help me. God, you've been my help in ages past, you're my hope for years to come. Now be thou my guide while life should last in my eternal home."

What you see here, beloved, is something very precious about being a Christian as we speak about it in New Testament terms. The Psalms tell us repeatedly that God is our refuge. He is our rock. Hebrews describes the Lord Jesus as a sympathetic high priest who feels the infirmities of our weakness. Christ knows what it's like to weep over those who would not receive him, those who reject his love. He knows what that's like. Christ knows what it's like to be fatigued. He knows what it's like to have the contradiction of sinners against himself. He knows what it's like, beloved, to be rejected by family, to be questioned. There was a reason why he said a prophet's not without honor except in his own hometown. There's a reason why, he said I've come to, you know, set a mother against her daughter, a father against his son. There's a reason. This is an expected aspect of spiritual life and the God who appoints it, the Christ who felt it in his own earthly experience, who lovingly, graciously gave himself up on the cross to redeem you from your sins, the God who loved you before the foundation of the world, beloved, here's why we took this spiritual rest stop, is that the God who has appointed these circumstances to you, as painful and chronic and unsolvable as they seem to be, is a God who loves you, who cares for you, who is working out transcendent, eternal purposes through this to sanctify you, to make you more like Christ, to do good to you in the end, and who in the meantime, as he's working out that great transcendent purpose in your life and in your heart, receives sympathetically your cries of distress, your cries of despair, and who goes, and as Scripture says, he won't extinguish the burning wick, he won't break the bruised reed. Our Christ, our God, our Lord, our Savior, our Master, our Shepherd is the one who

said, "Come to me all you who labor and are heavy-laden and I'll give you rest." We can go to friends, we can go to family and go like this and what we get in response is a rebuke, harsh sandpaper, coarse grade sandpaper on our bruised and broken hearts. That's never the response of Christ to his own. He says, "You come to me, pour out your heart before me, I'll give you rest." It's a rest that he mediates through his word. It's a rest that he mediates through the indwelling Holy Spirit. We have the privilege, we have the opportunity to go and to pour out our heart before him. John Calvin said the end of praying is this, that each one of us would be able to pour out our hearts before God. A Psalm says in another place, "I pour out my complaint before him."

All of this, beloved, should be an encouragement and a balm to your discouraged heart because it shows you that God views you sympathetically in your weakness, God is available as a refuge in your weakness, the Christ who saved you has not abandoned you because "nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord," Romans 8:38 and 39. "Shall tribulation or distress, persecution or nakedness, or peril, or sword? What will separate us from the love of our Lord for I am convinced that neither life nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." You know, when you think through it, beloved, when these things start to sink deeply into your soul and your heart, you realize that you have something far more valuable that God is giving you a greater gift in the midst of your affliction, God is giving you a greater gift by helping you to see how transcendent, how deep, how broad, how high, how wide is his love for you, that you're able to come and to seek him like this. "What a friend we have in Jesus. All our griefs and sorrows to bear. What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer." And the earthly isolation, the earthly discouragement, the earthly rejection, the earthly despair can lead you into a deeper experiential knowledge of the reality of your Savior and that's what we see in the third and final point here for today: the song of delight. The song of delight. Remember, I said this is kind of a synopsis. This is a condensed version of things. The principles that we see here take time to work out in a heart over over the course of time. It's not you read this in five minutes and now everything's better. It's not quite how it works. But what we do see here in verse 5 is the song of delight. The song of delight.

We saw the sigh of despair. We see the summons for deliverance. Now we see the song of delight and David vigorously turns to trust in verses 5 and 6. Read it there with me. He says,

5 But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. 6 I will sing to the LORD, because he has dealt bountifully with me.

Notice at the end of verse 4 he said my enemy, my foes, he's focused on that. Now in verse 5, he brings an emphatic contrast to it. Now, verse 5, he says, "But I." David has realistically acknowledged the challenge that is before him. He admits it all and he takes that in and he says, "But I." There is something more than this. "But I," emphatically expresses David's resolve not to collapse under the weight of the trial. He says, "I know

that this trial is not the end of it. I one day will rejoice and sing." And he ends the Psalm by saying, "I'll live by the outcome even if I am finding it difficult to live in the middle of the present. I know what the outcome is because the outcome in your loyal love to us, your loyal love to me could only be one of blessing and causing all things to work together for good to those who love you and are called according to your purpose."

And so he says, "I will sing to the LORD. He has dealt bountifully with me." What's he doing here? Beloved, there is nothing in circumstance to bring forth confidence. There's nothing in a projected solution to bring forth hope. There's nothing in the humans around him to strengthen and encourage his heart because he's surrounded by foes and enemies who are seeking his demise. There's nothing human, there's nothing horizontal here at all. He's way down with the counsel in his own mind. What David's doing here, beloved, is something that every true believer can do, he puts his confidence in God's loyal love. He puts his confidence in God's loyal love and, beloved, that's what you and I need to do today. We can look our problems square in the face and then we can, as it were, set them aside for a moment and remember transcendent spiritual realities that are assured to us by God's inerrant word.

God is a God of loyal love to his own. He will never leave us. He will never forsake us, Hebrews 13:5. "I will never ever leave you, nor will I ever, ever forsake you," is the sense and David remembers that and here's how that helps, here's how that brings a ray of sunshine into the darkness, these are the first rays of the morning sun against the black night sky saying that there is light coming even if it's still dark in the moment. God's loyal love to you, beloved, means that he will never leave you in a permanent state of despair even if your trial has lasted a very long time. Years, I get that. I get it. Listen, I don't say this cheaply and I don't say this speaking down to you. I don't say this as an abstract matter. These are vibrant, living, biblical realities that are to inform the way that we think about life.

As we've seen, as we build a biblical mind, we've seen that God is real. We know that from creation, the Canon, conscience, Christ and conversion. We know he's real. We know from the authority of Jesus Christ that the word of God can be trusted completely, implicitly, and that God would never lie to us. You see, we're ending up, we're starting to get back on the road, aren't we? It's about time to leave the spiritual rest stop and we're moving back onto the road and you start to see how these things come together to inform the way that you respond. It's not just Psalm 13, it's a whole Christian mindset, a whole biblical mindset that informs the way that we think about our trials, about our adversities, and where the well is that we draw upon to get the water to drink to give relief to our spiritual thirst in times of affliction. The Bible declares that God is a God of loyal love and therefore it's impossible that he would abandon us forever to our discouragement and affliction.

David says, verse 5, "I have trusted in your steadfast love." Verse 6, "I will sing to the LORD." This God who has made himself known as Yahweh, this God who has revealed himself as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, beloved, if he helped you to save you from sin, if he did the greater thing of delivering you from sin, Satan in his own righteous

judgment, isn't it obvious that he'll do the lesser things as well to make sure that you are thoroughly taken care of? If he did the greater thing, he'll do the lesser thing. It's just a question of time.

Sinclair Ferguson says this. He says, "God's name indicates that he is a gracious and powerful, a redeeming, providing, and guiding God, a God who overcomes all opposition to his purposes. The very God David needed, David had." Beloved, what you need in your discouragement, in your afflictions, in your sins, is a God who is gracious, a God who understands and a God who can deliver and a God who will deliver. And beloved, if you are in Christ, that's the God you have. You already have everything that you need in him, Colossians says in him we have been made complete, and because we see, beloved, by faith, we reach forward into the future and grab hold of what God will one day do and we bring the future blessing, we pull it into the present and let that be the encouragement to our heart. We reach, as it were, upward with our hands and we bring down the attributes of God's holiness, his goodness, his grace, his kindness, his patience. We reach down and pull those blessings of his attributes into our present situation, and we let the character of God and the long-term purposes of God inform our perspective on the present adversity that we face. That's how David can say in verse 6, "I will sing to the LORD." He's making a resolution to sing while he is still under the cloud of affliction. He says, "I will sing because God is loyal in his love. I don't have release yet but I can still sing," is the Christian position.

And beloved, just look at verse 5 again. David says, "I've trusted in your steadfast love." He's praying to God, the God of the Bible, the God who called him to be king. "I've trusted in your steadfast love. I don't have an answer. I don't have a solution. I don't know where this is going in an earthly sense. But God, I know your loyal love, and that's enough for my heart to rejoice." That is enough. God, beloved, here's the answer to everything, here's the answer to everything. It sounds so simplistic but it's informed by the entirety of Biblical revelation, the character of God and what the reality of faith in Christ leads us to in our position. God is who he is and that's enough. God is who he is and that's enough. Whether I get relief from my adversity or I don't, God is a God of steadfast love. Whether my situation gets better or worse, God is a God of steadfast love. And that's where we find our confidence and our hope.

So God has answered David's prayer, "How long? Will you forget me forever?" The questions and the praying that David does at the start is answered at the end of the Psalm and God's answer to David's prayer for enlightenment is God himself. That's the guidance that you and I need in our discouragement and despair. Who God is sufficiently tells us what God will eventually do. He knows. He cares. And beloved, you and I, then, we take the long-term perspective on our affliction based on God's character rather than on the short-term prospects of things getting better today or tomorrow. Beloved, if you try to live by those short-term prospects, maybe it'll get better today, eventually that wears you out because it doesn't always get better, does it? And so rather than looking for immediate circumstantial relief, we go back to the character of the God who loved us and gave himself up for us. You're so content with the certainty of the answer from God that you're content to wait on the timing of the answer.

So beloved, we do not trust God for permanent ease or for immediate relief. That's a false view of Christianity and it's done untold damage to tender-hearted souls to point them in that direction. Our faith is not for deliverance on our timetable and as a result days, months, years of affliction become insignificant in comparison to who God is and what he will ultimately do that is guaranteed to us by his character and by his word. Beloved, we have a benefit that David didn't. After the cross of Christ, you and I can see all of this far more clearly than David could. David saw what we have today in the light, David saw in shadows. As we contemplate the death and resurrection, the sin-bearing sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, his resurrection, he sent his Spirit and caused us to be born again to a living hope in him, we see all of this far more clearly than David could have. The God whom Scripture calls us to trust is the God who graciously sent his Son to deliver us from the greatest enemy of our souls which is our own sin. Beloved, when you were lost in sin, this God graciously redeemed you. When sin and Satan had their hold on your soul and you were a rebel against the purposes of God, resistant to the Spirit, in love with yourself, in love with your sin, this great God powerfully rescued you and brought you into his kingdom. The shed blood of Jesus Christ forever satisfies the wrath of God, and it also forever testifies to his good purposes to you.

In Christ, beloved, can't you wait? You say, "How long am I going to have to wait?" Well, beloved, just a little longer. Just a little longer because you and I as believers, we will stand on the shores of glory soon enough.

Let's pray.

Father, I pray that you would look with great mercy on those troubled hearts before you here this morning who've cried out, "How long? How long? How long?" Lord, we know that you understand. We know that you never bring a trial to us that is something that's not common to man, that you are faithful and you will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able, but with the temptation we'll provide the way of relief that we may be able to endure it. Father, we don't have any new answers to the earthly problems as we close today but we do trust in your steadfast love. We trust in our crucified and risen Christ who loved us and gave himself up for us. As a result, we rejoice in your salvation and now, in just a moment, we will sing to you and we will sing from hearts not denying the present affliction, but hearts that recognize more transcendently that you have dealt bountifully with us, and you will deal even more bountifully with us in the days to come to echo throughout all of the halls of eternity where the goodness of God, the grace of God will bound around and bounce and resound throughout the courts of heaven, "God is good and he's been good to me!" Father, we place our hope and trust in your character and in your promises and with that we sing. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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