

# The Book of Psalms

## Psalm 13

### Opening Prayer

### *Read Psalm 13*

#### Overview

Psalm 13 is an individual lament<sup>1</sup> but it is rather nondescript. That is, there is nothing in the psalm to suggest a setting or historical period of David's life. It could just as easily fit into the time following the rebellion of Absalom as to the time when David is pursued by Saul. The psalm itself moves from lament to eventually trust.

#### Structure

The psalm is easily divided into three parts each with a key theme and perceived action by the psalmist. Here are the three parts and in parentheses the perceived action.

1. The delay of God's answer (*Lament*) – 13:1-2
2. The inner struggle with God (*Petition*) – 13:3-4
3. The anticipated deliverance (*Trust*) – 13:5-6

#### The Delay of God's Answer (*Lament*) – Psalm 13:1-2

:1-2 - “how long” – This question is asked four times in these two verses, but its focus changes. The first two occurrences of “how long” the psalmist is focused on God. In the third occurrence the psalmist is focused upon his own inner struggle. In the fourth “how long” the psalmist has now cast his eyes towards his enemies.

*How does this threefold focus accurately describe your emotions when you are struggling with difficult times?*

- “hide your face from me” – God's face when He chose to shine it upon you was seen as a giving of God's favor. **Read Numbers 6:24-26**. So the opposite expression of God hiding His face from you would be seen as divine disfavor. This was also a commonly understood theology of the ancient Near East that God's face directed towards a person was a sign of

---

<sup>1</sup> Lament is a part of every literary culture because sorrow is a universal sentiment. From the soul songs and blues of the American south to the dirges and monotonal cries of those locked away in prison, sorrow fills our hearts at times and therefore finds its way into musical expression.

God's favor. "The Mesopotamian Poem of the Righteous Sufferer, in which the worshipper cries, "I called to my god, he did not show his face."<sup>2</sup>

- "How long shall I take counsel in my soul" – One of the difficult things we tend to do when we face uncertain or fearful times is to look inward. Soon our emotions have as much, if not more, power than whatever it is that we are facing.

*How can we maintain our emotions in the face of such circumstances?  
How can we bring ourselves out of a focus on our emotions to a focus upon God who is the only source of help?*

***Read Psalm 16:8; Psalm 63:6; Philippians 4:8***

*How do these verses help us in refocusing our emotions?*

### The Inner Struggle with God (Petition) – Psalm 13:3-4

:3-4 - David's petition found at the beginning of verse 3 is followed up with three possible results if God does not answer:

- a. "I will sleep the sleep of death"
- b. "my enemy will say, "I have overcome him"
- c. "my enemies will rejoice when I am shaken"

*How does this results focus often interfere with our ability to simply trust in God?*

- David in these verses also seems to be focused on what his enemies would think of him if God does not answer. How they would demean both David and his God.

*How do we avoid worrying about what other people end of thinking of us? **Read 2 Corinthians 5:17***

### The Anticipated Deliverance (Trust) – Psalm 13:5-6

:5-6 - The conjunction "but" at the beginning of verse 5 is the fulcrum on which the focus of the psalm turns. This appears in the Hebrew text as only one letter, a *waw*. Yet it is the key to hope in the psalm. Essentially it takes everything that has been said before the *waw* and compares and diminishes it to what comes after the *waw*. It works something like this:

- a. I have financial needs but(*waw*) God has promised to provide me with all that I need. ***Matthew 6:25ff***

---

<sup>2</sup> Bullock, Teaching the Text, Volume 1, page 91

- b. I have troubles and life isn't going like I thought it would but (*waw*) God has promised to be with us always. ***Matthew 28:20***
- c. I am a sinner and my sin seems large to me but (*waw*) Jesus has paid the price for all my sin. ***Romans 3:23-24***
- Here we can see that the purpose of the "but"(*waw*) is to turn our attention away from our troubles and onto Him who can address them and take them away.

### Summary

Psalm 13 moves us from lamenting over our troubles to petitioning God to help us with them to a place of trust as we reflect on who God is and what He has done. As we languish and great time seems to pass causing us to lament, "how long", we know that meditating upon God and His Word will bring us to a place of trust and we will then be equipped for whatever may come.

Closing Prayer