

# Despair to Trust

Anthony Kim

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Tonight we're going to be looking at Psalm 13. Psalm 13. So you can make your way there. Be reading from Psalm 13 this evening.

This is one of the most honest prayers in scripture. David is not merely discouraged here in Psalm 13. We see the rawness in his language in Psalm 13 of his heart pouring out in a feeling of abandonment. Four times he cries, "How long? How long? How long? How long?"

Matthew Henry notes that this psalm is the deserted soul's case and cure. Psalm specific origins, the exact circumstances of David's life that led to this composition remain undisclosed. And perhaps by design, this lack of detail prevents us from mistakenly confining this message solely to a king's particular troubles. Because its theme is broad. The psalm powerfully connects with all believers who have gone through seasons of spiritual winters. Often when we preachers preach on sorrow, you may hear you must do this or you must hold on to Christ or you must pray harder or you must trust more. But the scriptures paint a different picture altogether. See, if our salvation relied on our grip to God, we would have perished long ago. This psalm gives voice to the seasons when God seems distant. Yes, that is many times it can be the case. Perhaps when plans fail. How many of us have had plans that have failed? Or when it seemed like you were getting ahead and then you took three steps forward and then you go back four steps. You seem like well that's a disappointment and then the soul asks your soul asks how long am I going to go through this? How long?

The psalm models for us how honest complaint, honest complaint, focused petitions, a God centered trust moves a soul from despair to trust. In this affliction, David pours out his soul to God. His prayer is concise. Yet its very structure is highly noteworthy because it offers both guidance in how to pray through despair and encouragement how to get out of the despair.

So with that said, let us all stand out of respect for God's word. And I will read Psalm 13. Psalm 13 verse one. How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord, forever? How long wilt thou hide thy face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me? Consider and hear me, O Lord my God. Lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death. Lest mine enemies say I have prevailed against him and those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved. But I have trusted in thy mercy. My heart shall rejoice in thy salvation. I will sing unto the Lord because he hath dealt bountifully with me. You may be seated.

This psalm moves in three specific movements and they're in two verses at a time. First two verses is a cry of desperation. Verses three and four is the prayer of dependence. And then verses 5-6 is a song of deliverance. In each movement we see not what David does but what God does.

So let's look at verses one and two. The cry of desperation. I want to lift up those questions how he starts with how long. How long comes with it anxiety. Anxiety it's packaged this word how long anxiety and what is anxiety at the end of the day? What is it? It comes from focusing away from God onto the worldly uncontrollable circumstances. When we don't feel like we're in control. How long is this going to take? My world's a chaos. You ever feel that way? It's full of just uncontrollable circumstances. Not going to go the way it's going to go with me.

And so he says in verse one, "How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord." And then exaggerating forever. Forever. You see, David feels forgotten. Key here is feels. Matthew Henry writes that David thought God had forgotten him, but it was his infirmity. And what is an infirmity? It's a lack of strength. He's at his low, despair, lack of spiritual understanding. Somehow he forgotten God in his feelings. But you see, God never forgets his people. God never misplaces his children. God never loses track of his own. Amen. Isaiah 49:15 reminds us, "Can a woman forget her sucking child or nursing child? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee?" That's God. You see, David's feelings are real. They are real. They're really happening. But God's faithfulness is greater than his feelings. Amen.

And so we see in verse one continuing, "How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?" Full of emotions here. Full of emotions. This is deeper than feeling forgotten. Now this is feeling forsaken. Not only am I feeling forgotten, I'm feeling forsaken. God. Now the natural heart asks why would I feel this way or you feel this way. We often blame ourselves don't we when we think you know I have not been faithful enough and so God has left me somehow it's on me. That's a bad place to be. It's not a good feeling to think it's on you somehow. But look closer at the text. Who is the active agent in verse one? It says, "How long wilt thou hide thy face?" See, it's not us. We often think it's us, but it's not. God is doing this intentionally. He is the one hiding himself. He is the one hiding his face. You must understand a hard but glorious truth that God sometimes hides his face from his own children. It is not always that we have walked away. We would never walk away from our Lord. It is that he in his infinite wisdom leaves us in the dark concerning our interest in him. And you say, why would he do this? Why? It is to empty us of self-reliance. That's why he wants to empty us of self reliance. When we have no inward comfort, we learn that we cannot manufacture joy. That to get out of this despair, God must come through. You see that we cannot will ourselves into happiness, we are completely dependent on God for that.

So Spurgeon says about this part of the verse, a hidden face is no sign of a forgetful heart. God never forgets in his heart for us. See, God's hiddenness is not abandonment. God's silence is not absence. God's delay is not denial. It's not any of those.

Let's look at verse two. How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? Here David's thoughts are just spinning around. Okay, now it's going from feelings to like everything just feels swirling and swirling. It's just my sorrows. It's just daily. It's I'm taking counsel with my own thoughts and I'm just my mind is running in circles. You ever feel that way? Or you're devising plans in your head and just it just keeps failing. It keeps failing and keeps failing and then further you try to go and seek help from somebody but nobody can help you. And so that doesn't work. And then you feel overwhelmed because you're not getting this help you need. And then your mind is exhausted. And then beyond that, your anxious cares

move. Not only your mind, but your heart. Like he says, "My heart is full of this sorrow." Why? Because it's heavy. The answer hasn't come through. I can't seek for it outside externally. And often we load ourselves with things more than we need, don't we? That's our sinful condition. But notice David's problem is not that he needs to think harder. He's already done that at this stage. He's thought enough of this. His problem is that he needs God to come through and he's waiting. It is God who grants us the breath to cry out. Even think about that. He's the one that gives us the strength to cry out to God. And then is God who sustains the faith that asks how long. We can't even say how long without God allowing us to say how long. For if God had truly left us, we would not care that he was gone in the first place. Right? The very fact that you miss him, the very fact that you miss him is proof that he is keeping you. Remember, he doesn't have a forgetful heart.

David projects all to its wits end again exhausted of all the ideas to solve this problem that he is going through in his head and he's going none can help me that's where God wants him to be that's where God wants you to be in your despair that you go I can't get this from anyone else but you O Lord God must be the one who gives wisdom to you in this moment. It is God who must give you the clarity at this moment. It is God who must give you the direction at this moment. And then look at with me continuing verse two. How long shall my enemy be exalted over me? Here David's enemies rejoice because they think God has abandoned him. So on top of what is going on in his mind, all of his enemies are just waiting for him to sink to the bottom. And this creates external humiliation to David. And it compounds this already existing internal grief to even more. And he does this on himself. He starts not only thinking about his concerns, but he's going like, "What is about everyone else thinks?" You ever been in that situation? Not a good feeling, is it? Because he can't control anyone else. But here again, David is honest with himself. This is the natural human tendency that we not only carry all these things upon ourselves and we we feel like he's abandon us, but then we also think all these all these people are watching me. And so we're just getting to the bottom of this situation with David. Spurgeon says in this part of the text, it is not the Lord's will that the great enemy of our souls should overcome his children. God will never allow his children to be overcome by the enemy. And yet we foolishly think that the enemy will. So God himself will not allow the enemy to triumph over his people. Here's the thought. The psalm gives permission to being honest in anguish to God. We see that the believer may cry, may wrestle, may name the very pain that you're experiencing, but the psalmist does not hide his doubts. Notice he's expressing it. He's bringing it to the Lord. You see that? As bad as it sounds, he's at least he's bringing it to the Lord. Don't keep it to yourself. Share it. Share it. I love that we have this prayer request and you guys are doing that. Ladies, men, share it. That's the first step. That's the first step we see here, isn't it?

Let's look at verses three and four now. Now the request, now the prayer. The prayer of dependence. And notice these three petitions. They are focused because when you need something to be taken care of, you're focused, aren't you? You're like, I'm not going to think about anything else but this very thing that I need God to answer. Is that right? That's where we need to be in prayer. So, David now shifts from honest complaints to God to calling upon God. That is the right way to go. Don't give up. Don't give up. Here the tone shifts. The complaint turns to petition. But let us correct our thinking here. We often say, "David prayed and therefore God listened." No, no, no. The theology of the psalm here teaches us that God listens and

therefore David prays. The exact opposite. God hears. All important there. You must know that he is going to listen to your prayer. He must know that truth. He cares for us. Amen.

So let's look at verse three. Consider and hear me, O Lord my God. David appeals to God's covenant name, my God. David is not trying to get God's attention. And rather David is resting in the fact that God already holds him at this stage. My God, my God. And he says now in focus petition after knowing he hears, he asks, "Lighten mine eyes." What does this mean? It is a request for God to do what only God can do. You see, we cannot enlighten ourselves. We cannot force our eyes to see hope when there's only darkness. Only darkness here. This is the heart of the prayer. Despair looks like darkness. So David is not asking for God better circumstances. He can't see. It's dark. Not a better strategy. No more better ideas. I need to get out of this darkness. He is asking for God himself to act not merely information but revival. The restoration of spiritual sight and joy. Spurgeon says about light and mine eyes. God must strengthen faith. Faith is the eye of the soul. It is God who enables us to look beyond present troubles. Just as the physical eye enables us to see the physical world, faith is the spiritual capacity enabling the soul to perceive eternal realities, God's promises, and to look beyond immediate temporary troubles. Psalm 23:3, "He restoreth my soul. He leadeth me in the path of righteousness for his name sake." You see, he needs God to pull him out of the darkness and he wants that from him. And the way to do that is through light. Through light. Spurgeon adds that this prayer for God is to put the sparkle back in the eyes. Sparkle back into the eyes. That glimmer of hope. Because light brings hope, doesn't it? Light brings hope. And only God can do that. Only God can shed light upon the darkness.

And then he continues in verse three, another focused petition, lest I sleep the sleep of death. Here David is not being dramatic whatsoever. No, he is being again honest with his petitions. He knows that without God's intervention, he cannot survive. He's being completely honest here. I will die without you, Lord. Darkness engenders sleep, doesn't it? And despondency makes the eye heavy. There is but a step from despair to physical death. And David is aware of it. David is aware of it. Nothing is more killing to his soul than the want of God's favor. You want your heavenly father to be the one that will help you and rescue you. There is no one else. No one else. Because in his hands holds what? Life and death.

Verse four. Lest mine enemies say, I have prevailed against him and those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved. Here David's concern is not his reputation. It is God's honor. Now he's awake and not thinking about himself. But again, the petition is towards God listening and he's saying it's your honor is at stake. Spurgeon says David uses the enemy as an argument in prayer. Brilliant. You ever bring the enemy before God? You got to bring everything out. This is what he's saying. even the very thing that you're scared about because God will not allow his name to be dishonored. No enemy will be able to dishonor the name of God. You see, God himself will uphold his glory. God himself will silence the enemy and God himself will vindicate his people. Right? Our salvation and God's honor are intimately connected. intimately. They stand or fall together upon this. God will not let his name be mocked. He will lighten your eyes. You see, when David's praying here, he knows God is going to come through. He knows he's going to come through. And that is the transition. When you know, when you're praying in focus petition and you know he's going to come through, that's when the daybreak occurs. That's when you come from darkness to light in your prayer.

And so we're going to see that. We're going to see in verses five and six the song of deliverance. The song of deliverance a confident response to David's prayers. The psalm ends where every believer eventually arrives not because of our strength but because of God's sustaining grace. Verse five, here it is. But I have trusted in thy mercy. This is the turning point. Not because David tried harder, not because David figured it out, but because God's mercy held him the whole time. Even the ability to trust is a gift, isn't it? When without were fightings and within were fears, God anchored David in mercy. God's mercy is the support of his faith. It is the support of his faith. Continue on. I'm getting gems from Spurgeon. So, here's another one. We do not trust in our merit. We trust that God is merciful. And because he is merciful, he preserves our trust even when we feel like we are losing it. Faith is now an exercise. All the powers of his enemies had not driven the psalmist from his stronghold. I love that. You know what this means? That God preserved David's trust. God was the one that sustained David's faith and that God anchored David's soul. Whether he felt like it or not. You see that? Whether he felt forgotten, whether he felt forsaken, God was still there. Continuing in verse five, my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation. Notice here, David rejoices before the deliverance comes, not after. Why? Because God himself guarantees the outcome for every believer. It is a promise that joy will return. Though weeping endure long, joy will return again. Why? Because God ensures it. Joy and peace come by believing. Romans 15:13. Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost. You see that is God his power sustaining you through it all even when you felt forgotten.

You see he was as confident here David of the joy coming back if it had already been done already. Nothing changed in the circumstance. Remember that's not what he was praying for. Was it not the strategy or oh the plan now works. the ideas came through. No, what was it? We're going to see in verse six, he actually sings unto the Lord about it. Verse six, David began with sighing and feelings. Now he ends with joy of singing. Not because the situation changed like I mentioned, but because God changed David. There it is. God changed David. The mercy seat has so refreshed this poor weeper that he clears his throat for his song in the same breath. Because he hath dealt bountifully, generously with me. That's verse six. David speaks here in the past tense. You see that? He hath. He hath even though the deliverance is still in the future. Why? Because when God promises, it is as good as done. Whether you feel like it or not, it is done. He speaks of it as a thing in the past because by faith, again, forward looking, he hath received the earnest of the salvation. See, we often think about salvation just upon our salvation and conversion, but he's saving us along from our sin and sanctification. It's a continual process. We need to constantly be rescued, don't we, from ourselves. And this is the case and point of David's prayer that he will be rescued. It's already been done. Because you see, God himself deals bountifully with his people. It's a word of generosity. God is always generous with his people. Again, whether we feel like it or not, whether you feel you're emptied of all sorts of things, maybe it's good that you're empty of this world and full of him. That's the change that was done with David. He knew and he realized it wasn't the things of this world that ultimately can fulfill the very thing that he needed. David needed to be changed and he was.

What does it say? He be turned and he shall be turned. That is what happened here with David. And so God himself restores his soul. God himself brings the dawn after the night. It never stays night, does it? There is always the dawn. So Psalm 13 shows us God never forgets his people. God never abandons his children. God never allows the enemy to triumph. God himself sustains

our faith. God himself restores our joy. God himself brings his people from sighing to singing. When God seems silent, he is still working. When God seems hidden, he is still holding. He's holding you. And when God seems distant, he is still delivering. And like David, every believer will one day say, "He hath dealt bountifully with me in your despair." Isn't that a wonderful trust that God has given to you? That it'll always be from a night to dawn in your experience of despair. Because you see the God who brought David from despair to trust is the same God who is forming by the way not just individual believers but us as a church into a people who rejoices in his salvation. The honest cry like David here illustrated as you may ask not just individually but as a church. How long? You may ask that cry is by the way not disqualifying. What do I mean by that? It is the language of a soul that still believes enough to speak. That God hears the cry and is moved by it. and that our prayers as a as a local church, all the things that we pray together, God is hearing all of them one by one and collectively as a church. And this psalm shows how prayer reorients the heart. You see, we started off in verses one and two with disorientation. Did you notice that? Did you notice the heart of disorientation of David? And then how God changed his heart to be reoriented. And that is often a loving father, isn't it? And as a parents, we know that when our wayward children goes and are disoriented by the things of the cares of this world, what do we do? We reorient them, don't we? Don't do that, son. Don't do that, daughter. It's not the way to go. And that's what God does all the time. all the time, always consistent. And so because he's always consistent and always good to us, we can sing the song of praise. And we do that collectively, don't we? As a church, we don't just pray, we worship the Lord in psalm and hymns and spiritual songs. And so the final I will sing is not a forced optimism but it comes out from answers to our prayers and his timing and his goodness and is the psalmist testimony that God has acted and that God's action is the ground of praise.

So when you're singing are you filled that way? You know, whenever I I'm there ready to sing, sometimes I can be in a despair and as I'm hearing men, brothers and sisters singing, I suddenly come back with joy right there when I'm singing. Have you ever experienced that? You can be in the spirit and you're hearing your brothers and sisters praising God. As a church, it's a wonderful thing, isn't it? We're helping each other out in our singing. Final exhortation here. Let us truly be a people who trust God's mercy when we cannot see his hand. Depend on his spirit when we feel weak. Look upon his word when our hearts are heavy. To encourage one another here when sorrow lingers and sing together because God has dealt bountifully with us. Psalm 13 ends with confidence not in David but in God. And so do we. Let me end with this. He has dealt bountifully with us. He is dealing bountifully with us. And he will deal bountifully with us. To him be the glory to this local church now and forever. Amen.

Let's pray. Thank you, Father, for this example of David and how we walk this through honest complaints, focused petitions, and a heart of praise of how you deal bountifully with us, your people. Father, I pray that we would experience this together, not only individually, but as a local body, experiencing these things in ways, Lord, that only you can provide. We thank you that we have this local body. May we never take it for granted what you're doing here at Calvary Road with all the men and women here that gather faithfully each week. Father, I pray for them as they go on this week that they would stay connected as if we never really spiritually left each other because our hearts are so bound together and honesty of what's going on in our lives. Focused petitions in our prayer request and updates of praise reports. Thank you so much, Father, for this design that you have done for individual as well as corporately. Help us to be blessed with this

design. And I pray God that you will be glorified in and through all of these things. And we'll thank you in Jesus name. Amen.