

“I Will Sing unto the LORD”

Psalm 13

There are times when we hear people asking, and maybe even ask ourselves, whether God still cares, or whether He's still there. It's not so much a question of "Why" as it is a question of "Where." God seems to either not be there or taking a "hands off" approach to our trials and despair, so we find ourselves, as David did, asking God "How long?"

The occasion to this Psalm is not given and all we can determine is that David was dealing with an enemy that seemed to be successful in causing him great anguish. Based on the first two verses and the four questions asked, it is safe to say that he was also dealing with an issue of sin that would have broken fellowship with the Lord.

Whatever the cause for this psalm, its content makes it clear that no matter how bad things look, we can still pray, and we can know with assurance that God will be there to hear and to help. It may not be when we think it should be nor how we think it should be, but as David found, if we seek Him, He will be found.

This psalm is very clearly divided into three "stanzas" (strophes), with two verses per stanza.

...[T]hree groups of decreasing magnitude. A long deep sigh is followed, as from a relieved breast, by an already much more gentle and half calm prayer; and this again by the believing joy which anticipates the certainty of being answered. This song as it were casts up constantly lessening waves, until it becomes still as the sea when smooth as a mirror, and the only motion discernible at last is that of the joyous ripple of

calm repose.

I. THE PLIGHT OF THE SORROWFUL – VS. 1-2

WHAT WE ARE IN

A. Whether this be sorrow for sin in our lives or sorrow from external forces working against us, there will be times when we wonder how long this trial will be.

B. Four times the words "how long" are found here – four questions the psalmist is asking of the LORD. Some might say he was questioning God because he was angry with him, but the rest of the psalm doesn't show that. He was in a place of great distress and was simply calling out to ask how long it would last.

1. "How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever?" – literally, until when, how long...for ever? Whatever the cause of this desperate cry, it seemed like the sorrow would never end.
2. "How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?" How long will it be before the psalmist sees the Lord's face, how long will it be before he dwells in His fellowship again as he so desired to do?

Isaiah 59:2

² But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.

The desperation of the fellowship of God is

not seen any more vividly than when Jesus hung on the cross and the Father turned His back on Him, so to speak, when He took upon Himself all of our sins, breaking that previously unbroken fellowship. The cry He gave after three hours of darkness would have been soul-piercing.

Matthew 27:45–46

⁴⁵ Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.

⁴⁶ And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, **Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?** that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

3. "How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily?"

I believe this is what the chastening of the Lord looks like and sounds like. "When a soul feels the burden and guilt of sin, it tries innumerable schemes of self-recovery; but they are all useless. None but God can speak peace to a guilty conscience" (Clarke).

4. "How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?"
 - a) This seems to be pointing to a real occasion of an enemy of David that oppressed him – who that is, we do not know.
 - b) However, considering the way the first three questions are phrased, this could also be, and more applicable to us today, a spiritual enemy. Satan attacks relentlessly, and if we don't deal with sin in our lives

when the Holy Spirit convicts us of it, he will have a much easier time with the spiritual attack, and we will be so overwhelmed with that that we might think God has abandoned us.

This may speak "of spiritual enemies, and is true of saints when sin prevails and leads captive, and when the temptations of Satan succeed; as when he prevailed upon David to number the people, Peter to deny his master, etc." (Gill)

II. THE PRAYER OF THE SUPPLICANT – VS. 3-4

HOW TO GET OUT OF IT

A. As so many have stated, prayer really is the key to whatever trouble we are in.

B. The definition of "suppliant" is one that entreats; a petitioner who asks earnestly and submissively. That's what David is doing here, and that is what we need to do when we are in those sorrowful times.

1. "Consider and hear me, O LORD my God" – this clause answers to verse one. David's prayer was that the LORD would look upon him again and hear his cry. He's asking for the fellowship to be restored. Whether this was broken because of sin initially or not is unknown, but he realizes here that whatever caused the separation he wanted it restored.

"I have prayed; I am seeking thy face I am lost without thee; I am in darkness; my life draws nigh to destruction... O Lord my God, consider this; hear and

answer, for thy name's sake." (Clarke)

2. "Lighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death"

- a) "Lighten my eyes" – Hebrew figure of speech for revive me. Again, speaks to the thought David had that the Lord had turned His face away from him and no longer lighting his way. If he didn't get victory over that, the sorrow and agony he was dealing with, to him was overwhelming to the point he thought he would die.

Ezra 9:7-8

⁷ Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass unto this day; and for our iniquities have we, our kings, and our priests, been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to a spoil, and to confusion of face, as it is this day.

⁸ And now for a little space grace hath been shewed from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage.

- b) "Lest I sleep the sleep of death" – another Hebrew figure of speech. His heart ached to a degree where life itself seemed to be slipping away.
- c) Verse four continues the thought of comparison: if I don't get relief, if my eyes don't get enlightened, the enemy will win. He had no more strength to fight – whether it was a real, physical enemy or a real, spiritual enemy. Either way, the enemy was real, and, to David, he was winning.

III. THE PRAISE OF THE SAINT – VS. 5-6

WHAT TO DO NEXT

A. I don't mean to say that we are to wait until the end is in sight or the trial is over to praise the Lord. We are to realize the position we are in, what to do to get out of it, so to speak, and praise Him through it all. The first phrase of verse five points to this – "But I have..."

1. "But I have trusted in thy mercy" – again, could be pointing to some sin that brought this despair upon David. Even if it isn't exactly that, the truth still holds that we can praise God for His mercy (His lovingkindness, His goodness) and trust that it will always be there, no matter what we have done, or what is happening to us or around us.
2. "My heart shall rejoice in thy salvation" – answers to the question in verse two as to how long David would have sorrow in his heart every day. The answer to that question is given here – God's salvation of His children in their time of need should be all we need to have our innermost being rejoice. Even if we're still in the midst of the storm, our heart can and must rejoice.

B. Not only had the psalmist trusted in the mercy of God through it all – he is now singing unto the LORD where previously he was crying in agony of heart to Him. What changed? There's no record of the circumstances in his life changing, but

what did seem to change was his attitude in realizing that God had been dealing "bountifully" with him all along.

1. The tense of the verb "hath dealt" is in a tense that normally corresponds to the English past tense. It speaks of completed action.
2. David remembered all the times God had dealt bountifully and generously in rewarding him for being faithful to Him.
3. This may point back to verse one and answers to the first question asked: How long wilt thou forget me...?" In reality, He never did and never will.

Hebrews 13:5

⁵ Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

Conclusion: When we think all hope is gone and all have abandoned us or forgotten about us, remember God never will. Man may, and often does, fail us, may forget us. We need to be careful we aren't one of those that gets so caught up in our own circumstances in life that we forget about others and their problems.

In August 1932, Dorsey was scheduled to be the feature soloist at religious services in St. Louis. Because his wife Nettie was pregnant, Dorsey had reservations about leaving her behind. "Something was strongly telling me to stay," he recalls. Yet, commitments had been made and he knew people

in St. Louis would be disappointed if he canceled. So Tom Dorsey left for the revival service. During the performance the next night in the steaming St. Louis heat, a messenger from Western Union approached Dorsey on the stage with a telegram. Puzzled, Dorsey opened the envelope and read the four devastating words: "Your wife just died." He rushed to a phone and called home, only to hear it confirmed: "Nettie is dead."

Dorsey quickly returned to Chicago. There he learned that just before his wife died she had given birth to a boy. Later that night, the baby died. Dorsey now had to deal with two losses, two funerals. "I buried Nettie and our boy in the same casket," he says. "Then I fell apart."

During this painful time, one of Dorsey's friends made arrangements for him to use a local music school's piano. There, alone with his thoughts and a piano, Dorsey describes what happened: "I sat down at the piano and my hands began to browse over the keys. Then something happened. I felt as though I could reach out and touch God. I found myself playing a melody, one I'd never heard or played before, and words came into my head — they just seemed to fall into place: 'Precious Lord, take my hand,/Lead me on, let me stand,/I am tired, I am weak, I am worn,/Through the storm, through the night/Lead me on to the light,/Take my hand, precious Lord,/Lead me home.'"

Dorsey said: "The Lord gave me these words and melody, He also healed my spirit. I learned that when we are in our deepest grief, when we feel farthest from God, this is when He is

closest, and when we are most open to His restoring power. And so I go on living for God willingly and joyfully, until that day comes when He will take me and gently lead me home."

Dorsey would recover from his losses. He would go on to write and compose more than 400 gospel songs, including, "We Will Meet Him in the Sweet By and By," "Stand By Me," and "There'll Be Peace." But it was "Precious Lord" that established Tom Dorsey as the architect of Gospel music, and it endeared him to people around the globe. Tom Dorsey knew that God was with him -- even in the worst of times.

CATHOLIC DIGEST, Feb. 92, p. 65-66.