

## PSALM XIII

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the language of the old proverb, troubles arrive on horseback but depart on foot. This is a psalm offered up at the point of despair, and it gives us a pattern or example to follow in similar circumstances.

### **THE TEXT**

*How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? 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 enemy 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 (Ps. 13:1-6).*

### **overview**

The psalm divides naturally into three parts. The first is the lament made before God, charging Him with having neglected his own servant (vv. 1-2). The second part is the prayer itself, seeking deliverance still (vv. 3-4). The third portion is the expression of confidence and joy (vv. 5-6).

### **HOW LONG?**

We have repetition in this psalm, but it is not a vain repetition. Four times David asks *how long* God will continue to leave his servant in the midst of affliction. Just as there is no resurrection without a cross, so there is no song of faith at the end of this psalm without the lament at the beginning. This is not impiety or faithlessness. Even the lament that God does not see him is offered up on the faithful assumption that God sees.

This is no contradiction because the psalmist wants the comfort and deliverance of intervening *action*, not the comfort of theological platitudes. How long will God *leave* him here alone with the counsel of his own thoughts and plans?

### **AN ARGUMENT GOD LOVES**

The lament had included the problem that his enemies were continuing to exult over him (v. 2). The petition is offered—"God must lighten my eyes, saving me from death. God, *listen* to this. If you do not, then my enemy will say that he has *won*." The Philistines took Samson, their great enemy, and made him grind their grain. In just the same way, the psalmist takes his adversaries and makes their wicked behavior his central argument in the prayer. In this prayer, they grind for David. God loves this argument, because He hates few things more than the insolent way the wicked treat His people. This is one of the things believers today need to learn how to do.

### **TRUST, JOY, MUSIC**

The psalm concludes with David's great faith exhibited. In verse 5, that faith is expressed clearly. God is merciful, and David trusts Him. David knows that he will be able to rejoice in the salvation that God will bring to him. As a result, David will sing before the Lord because He has dealt with him so bountifully.

### **applications**

The book of Job tells us that man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. Consequently, learning to apply the truths of this psalm is one of the most important lessons we can ever learn.

*This is a psalm*—this was not given to us in the psalter so that we could *watch* what David did. The psalms are a corporate possession, and all God's children are *required* to work their way through these things. But in our false piety, we shrink back from the language of the first two verses here, wondering what will keep us from a *wrong* kind of complaining spirit against God. The answer is that the rest of the psalm will do this, as well as the rest of the psalms. You learn to express what you otherwise would not. Learning all the psalms in faith is the first step in emotional discipleship.

*I will sing*—this can be taken both as a vow, and as a cry of faith. As a vow, David is promising to sing God's praises if God delivers him. As a cry of faith, it is a statement in the present that he will be delivered in the future, and so he will obviously be singing God's praise. It is possible to grunt your thanksgiving, but do you want to be limited that way? Learning all the psalms in faith is essential in giving that faith a richer vocabulary.

*Affliction*—God does all things well, and the longer the silver spends in the furnace, the more we may conclude that more dross had to be removed. The saints of God over the years have learned this truth countless times, and have expressed it in many glorious

ways. Samuel Rutherford said that when he was in the cellar of affliction, he would look for the Lord's choicest wines. It is better to be praying in the belly of the fish like Jonah than to be sleeping in the ship like Jonah. John Trapp said that a man riding to his coronation will not think much of a rainy day. Spurgeon said that the Father's wagons rumble most heavily when they are bringing us the heaviest gold of grace. Understanding the world in faith prevents murmuring. Learning all the psalms in faith keeps your heart humble and obedient during affliction.

*Faith settles us*—when we are in perplexity because of our trials, our heart is like the sea in a strong wind. Like the waves, the counsels and thoughts that we have go up and down, up and down. Faith settles our hearts because faith can see the long-term result. The result of today's affliction may have no result in the circumstance of today. The rain God sent in February may have had the harvest of August in mind. If a fruit tree is beaten on the trunk with a baseball bat, it releases a plant hormone called ethylene, which produces a flowering and fruitful result the following season. Learning all the psalms in faith puts your feet on the ground.

*Count it all joy*—James tells us that when we encounter trials, we are to reckon it as a joy and privilege (Jas. 1:2-5). Why are we to do this? Because, James says, trials bring patience and patience bring maturity. If we lack wisdom concerning this, then we can ask God to teach us in our trials. We are to glory in our tribulations because the end of the matter is that the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:3-5). The greater the trial, the greater the joy. Like Paul and Silas in prison, we want an articulate joy. Learning all the psalms in faith is a wonderful way to keep a joyful heart from exploding.