

## Oh LORD, How Long?

Psalm 13: 1-6

A large portion of the Psalms were written by David. Through these we find an intimate look into the life of a man who sought to serve the Lord and was favored of Him. Many of the Psalms were written during very difficult moments in the life of David. Throughout his life, David experienced a series of highs and lows. He seemed to continually travel from the mountain top of victory to the valley of despair and back up again. This cycle played out over and over again in his life. Often the valleys came quickly after enjoying a great victory.

Our lives may not have experienced the extremes David's did, but we all can relate to him. The cycle from deep valleys to mountain top experiences seems to follow the natural rhythm of life. We all have seasons of difficulty and pain, but thankfully these are tempered with seasons of joy and triumph.

This particular psalm was written at a low point in David's life. He was on the run from Saul, seeking to survive long enough to find his place as king of Israel. During these moments of despair, David discovered reasons for hope. John Phillips described this psalm this way: "Man's extremity is God's opportunity. When we are at our wit's end, without resources, at a loss for a way, perplexed and desperate—that is usually when we see God begin to work. But before He does anything about our *situation* He wants to do something about *ourselves*, and that is where we begin to hedge. We want God to *deal with our complication*; He wants to *develop our character*. We want Him to change our circumstances; He wants to change us first. That is why He allowed the circumstances. We cry: "Hurry up, Lord!" He says: "It's your move. I won't move until you do." That is what this little psalm is all about."<sup>i</sup>

Let's consider the [phases](#) within this moment in David's life as we think on the question: [Oh LORD, How Long?](#) First we discover:

**I. A Plea within Adversity** (1-2) – Here David makes an impassioned plea unto the Lord. Notice:

**A. He felt Deserted** (1) – [How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?](#) It is apparent that David felt separated from God at this moment in life. It must have been some time since he had enjoyed fellowship and communion with Him. During this time of desperation, David cried out to the Lord, questioning how long this season of despair would last.

- David felt forgotten of the Lord, as if He no longer remembered his servant and the great need he possessed. It is as if David was asking: "God do you not know where I am and what I am

dealing with at this moment? I have tried to serve you, following your direction for my life, but you seem distant and unconcerned.” Certainly God had not forgotten David, but in his time of loneliness and despair, he felt that way. We too have been there I’m sure. God has never forgotten one of His own, but there are times when we feel alone and separated from Him.

- David not only felt forgotten, he felt forsaken. LORD, how long will you hide your face from me? He felt as if God had left him to bear his burdens alone. In this moment of loneliness and confusion, David wondered if God had abandoned him. Now we know that isn’t the case, but we too have wondered the same. Have we not questioned whether the Lord was near, whether He understood our need, and when He would respond. This is human nature. We must remember that He has promised to never leave nor forsake us. There will be times when God is silent, but even then, we are not forsaken!

**B. He felt Defeated** (2) – *How long shall I take counsel in my soul, **having sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?*** The trials of life were overwhelming and David struggled with depression. He had sought the Lord, but only heard silence. His heart was filled with great sorrow day after day, and it seemed as if the enemy continued to prosper. He felt forsaken of the Lord and defeated by his enemies. David had reached a low point in life.

- I am sure each of us has dealt with these emotions before as well. There are times when we pray unto the Lord and it seems as if the heavens are brass. We feel as if the harder we try, the more grief and sorrow we experience. Our lives are lived in light of the Lord, seeking to please Him, and yet it appears those who work against us prosper while we suffer great defeat.

- I never intend to make light of depression and the struggles that are very real in the lives of many. Far too long we have considered depression as a lack of spiritual strength and maturity, but that isn’t always the case. Those close to God can suffer feelings of depression. As we work through those times, we must bear in mind the delight of the enemy. Satan likes to paint a dark picture before those who are already struggling. He wants them to focus on the defeats and failures while parading the accomplishments of others before us. He wants us to believe our God is no longer listening, and will even try to convince us that He is unable to help. Even in the darkest moments, we must do as David did and seek counsel from God within our souls!

**II. A Prayer of Anticipation** (3-4) – Following a plea from within adversity, David offers a prayer of anticipation. Consider:

**A. His Recognition** (3a) – *Consider and hear me, O LORD my God.* Although his situation was desperate, David knew in whom he had believed. Wicked men may have sought his life, but he knew he call upon the Lord in his time of need. He may have been in the depths of despair, but he had not lost all hope.

- Even in the midst of the valley, while facing great adversity, we too must remember to whom we belong. Our hope is anchored in the finished work of Christ and the eternal life He provides. Life will be hard to bear at times, but even then we must trust in the Lord, being mindful of His great love and power to meet whatever need we may have.

**B. His Request** (3b) – *Consider and hear me, O LORD my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death.* David knew his enemies were stronger than he was. He did not have the power or resources to overcome them, but he remained confident in the Lord. He cried out unto the Lord to compensate for his inability. He was saying, “Lord I can’t, but I know you can. I need your help, lest I perish. My life is in your hands. Save me from my adversity.”

- At this moment David did the only thing he could do and the best thing he could do: trust in the Lord. We too will face trials that overwhelm us. We will face situations that are beyond our ability to handle, and apart from the Lord will end in certain defeat. In those times we too must trust the Lord to come to our aid and defense. Our lives are always in His hand, but we seem to recognize it more when life seems to get out of control. Call on Him; He will respond!

**C. His Respect** (4) – *Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him; and those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved.* I sense here a concern for the good name of God. David knew he had been anointed king according to God’s sovereign plan. Those around him were aware of that as well. Sadly they were not concerned with God’s will be carried out. David knew if he perished, it would appear that God had failed. He wanted to honor the name of the Lord and do all he could to bear witness to the Lord’s power and grace.

- David realized this wasn’t about him. He was dealing with adversity, but he wanted the Lord’s will to be done. We need to come to the realization that our lives are not all about us either. Certainly God has a plan for us, and He is working all things for our good, but His name must be exalted through our lives. We ought to have a desire to honor the Lord in all we do, and make every effort to abide by His sovereign will.

**III. A Praise for Abundance** (5-6) – Even in adversity, David realized God had been good and he felt compelled to praise Him for the abundance he had received. Consider:

**A. The Source of His Faith (5a)** – **But I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.** Although life had been difficult as of late, David had not lost hope. He knew the source of His strength. He was not trusting in the abilities or wisdom of men, but in the mercies of God. As long as God was on his side, he would never fail. This afforded great comfort and confidence.

- We all face storms in life and are called upon to fight many battles. Often we find ourselves navigating a dark and lonely valley. If we are trusting in our abilities or those of others, we will surely fail. However, if we do as David and trust in the mercies and grace of the Lord, we can prevail. Christ already conquered every enemy we can face as He died on the cross and rose triumphant from the grave. We have nothing to fear because we are secure in Him!

**B. The Significance of His Faith (5b)** – **But I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.** David had no way of knowing what the outcome of this trial would be, but he was not totally dismayed. Even through great adversity, he could rejoice in his salvation. Even if God chose to let him die in the heat of battle, he was secure in the Lord. Man had not created or called him, and man could not utterly destroy him. He was comforted while resting in the Lord.

- If we could only rest in this eternal truth, our lives would be much richer and less worrisome. We will deal with adversity as long as we live. The trials and cares of life will follow us to the grave, but we need not live in despair. The saved by grace have a blessed hope and assurance that will endure death and the grave. Christ purchased our eternal redemption on the cross and secured eternal life as He rose triumphant. We have nothing to fear. We can always rejoice in our salvation, knowing we are secure in Christ and will spend eternity with Him!

**C. The Song of His Faith (6)** – **I will sing unto the LORD, because he hath dealt bountifully with me.** While contemplating the Lord's blessings, David was moved to offer a song of praise. The enemy may have been close at hand, but he wasn't as close as the Lord. God had preserved him up to this point and David was confident He would continue to provide. While in the valley of despair, David broke out in song unto the Lord, worshiping Him for His many benefits.

- I don't know where you are in life at this moment, but we have received enough from the Lord to praise Him at all times. I consider the life and suffering of Job. He lost everything he had, and yet He praised the Lord because he knew his Redeemer lived. Life may be hard to bear, but Christ our Lord remains seated on the throne in heaven. He has provided for our salvation and dealt bountifully with us as well. If we never received another blessing, we would still be obligated to offer praise and worship to the Lord for His many benefits.

**Conclusion:** Are you facing a trial in life today? Does it seem as if you will suffer defeat? If so, why not come to Jesus and share your heart with Him? He already knows where you are, but He desires to talk with you about it. He alone can provide the strength and help to overcome. If you are seeking victory in your own ability, defeat will likely come.

If you have never received Christ as your Savior, you don't know the peace He gives and grace He provides. You don't know the power of the Holy Spirit working in your life. Rather than continuing to deal with these burdens alone, why not come to Jesus and receive salvation?

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<sup>i</sup> John Phillips Commentary Series, The - The John Phillips Commentary Series – Exploring Psalms, Volume One: An Expository Commentary.