

Where Are You, God?

Psalms Series

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Bible Text: Psalm 13

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Psalm 13 we come to and as this Psalm opens, David is in a position that perhaps many of us can identify with either right now or in times gone by. I know that I can. As the Psalm opens, David is full of despair over a prolonged struggle that has sapped his strength and exhausted his patience and yet when it closes just a few short verses later, he is full of joy. So there is a great discrepancy between the beginning of the Psalm and the end of the Psalm as we go through it and we want to see and examine the details of this so that we can get some insight into our own spiritual condition. One of the things that I really appreciate about teaching the Psalms is that you see that there are nuances to the spiritual life, that it's not all simple and cut-and-dried. The issues that we face in our souls are different, their complex sometimes and we need the help of Scripture to think through them and to understand them so that we can prosper spiritually like the Lord has appointed for us to do.

What you see in Psalm 13 is that God here in this portion of his word has given us direction for our most grievous sorrow and may I suggest, the sorrows that we don't care to discuss with one another. You know, you and I all know that we have a way of putting on our best face for Sunday morning and when we're together with other Christians we put our best foot forward and I suppose it's appropriate that we would do that but what we want to avoid is becoming hypocrites that pretend that we're one thing when actually something much different is going on inside us. Another thing that you see in these Psalms that we've studied and that we're going to see again in Psalm 13 is that the biblical reality of spiritual life is so much different than what is sometimes portrayed as Christianity. Strict external rules of conduct will not help you through the times of your difficult sorrow. You know, these instructions about what you should wear and what you should say and all of that. When you're really struggling, those things have no power of persuasion; they have no power of comfort to your heart. The shallowness of an external approach to Christianity is exposed when the reality of life hits. At the same time, the approach to Christianity that makes everything an emotional high and lots of singing and lights and fog machines and all of that, those things are meaningless and helpless when you're deeply discouraged and you're walking away from a fresh grave of someone that you loved, for example. Then you see through it all; you see how empty and superficial it is and you see through the emptiness of rituals and bowing at the right time and standing and all of that. It doesn't do anything to help the human heart. If anything that our sorrow

does, it can make us grateful, we can be grateful for the way that sorrow helps us sort out that which is false so that we can at least start to look for what is true. If Christ is Lord, if he is the eternal Son of God as he said that he was, if God's word is true and it is actually powerful for the conversion of the soul and the perfecting of the soul as Psalm 19 says, then there must be an underlying reality to it. There must be a power to it that transcends the cheap substitutes that are offered to us in the church today and what we want to find is what is the reality that would make the substitutes be evident for the cheap plastic superficialities that they are.

Well, Psalm 13 is going to be one aspect of helping us with that and if there's anything that I would want this series on the Psalms to do for you is to see that there is a richness to living the Christian life. There is a power. There is a spiritual depth that is desirable, that engages us at the fullness of our mind, the fullness of our emotions, the fullness of our volition. We see the Scripture come and engages us as total men and women at every aspect of our being and until someone sees that that is what Christianity, living, vibrant Christianity is, they haven't found the real thing yet. So as we go through the Psalms, we're being introduced by the Spirit of God to what the real thing is.

But when we come to the Psalms, no matter how low we may be, we can find David there and David is even lower. When we come to the Psalms in the fullness of joy, we can find David there and find that he's even higher. There is nothing in our spiritual experience that goes outside what is presented to us in the Psalms and Scripture says in Romans 15 that what was written in former times was written for us that we might be encouraged by it, that we might be comforted by the Scriptures and Psalm 13 is a part of that. Psalm 13 helps us where many Christians just would refuse to go, where they would say, "That's not appropriate." Psalm 13 goes right there, engages us right at that point and helps us where a lot of spiritual experience simply doesn't go. James Montgomery Boice said about this Psalm and the depth of despair that David expresses here. He says and I quote, "If any of us would admit to such feelings of despair, many of our friends would look askance at us, shake their heads and wonder whether we are Christians. Isn't that true? Isn't that the chief reason why you do not talk to other Christians about many of your problems?"

But if wisdom makes us slow to share with men because we understand that other hearts don't share the sorrows and understand the sorrows, the same wisdom should make us look quickly to Scripture for direction and Psalm 13 gives us that direction. I want to show you three aspects of this Psalm. Psalm 13 is broken into three parts of two verses each and so we're going to break it down that way. In the first part, in the first two verses of this, you're going to see the sigh of despair. The sigh of despair. If you're taking notes, that's the heading on the first point. David is intensely discouraged. David's heart is broken and we don't have much in the way of historical background to help us know the occasion of his discouragement but you can practically hear him moan as you read this Psalm and we ask the question: David, what has provoked you to such despair? Why such spiritual depth? Why such spiritual longings and disappointments and mourning and grieving that you're expressing? Why this sigh of despair?

And when you read just in these first two verses, you're going to see that there are three aspects to it. I am continually impressed with the inspiration of the holy Scriptures. I am continually amazed at how much the Spirit of God is able to say in just a few short words. My preaching is the exact opposite of that. I guess that's why I appreciate the genius of the Spirit to express so much with such brevity and he's done it here again in the first two verses of Psalm 13. Why is David despairing? First of all, we're going to see three aspects of this sigh of despair. First of all, he sighs in despair because, first of all, his silent God. His silent God. Four times in those first two verses he cries out, "How long?" Look at it with me there in verse 1,

1 How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? 2 How long shall I take counsel in my soul, 2 How long shall I take counsel in my soul, Having sorrow in my heart all the day? How long will my enemy be exalted over me? How long will my enemy be exalted over me?

Spurgeon said that he was tempted to call this the howling Psalm because of how long David repeats that phrase. How long. How long. He's howling as he brings this word of God to bear upon us.

What you see is that you kind of reconstruct a little bit of what was going on in David's heart and in his mind here. You see that there was some kind of external provocation that he had been expecting God to intervene and help him in. "How long will my enemy be exalted over me," he says at the end of verse 2. There is some manner of external provocation but what has happened is that it has shifted from the external concern to a vertical concern and God has not provided the practical help that David was expecting in his difficulty. He had gone to God and asked for help and nothing changed. So he went back and he asked again and nothing changed. And he did it again and nothing changed. And again and nothing changed. And he started to realize that what had been an acute problem, what had been a moment of crisis, there was this external problem pressing on him that he thought would go away as he asked God for help, it just continued and settled into the new state of affairs and he was deeply discouraged and troubled and broken over this. But what happens and I can speak from experience on this, what happens is that over time when that chronic problem settles in and just takes root and becomes the new reality of your life, you start to realize that this isn't going to change. This is the new status quo for me and I don't like it. And yet your cries to heaven bounce back off the brass bells of the skies. "How long?" and it echoes back to you and pings back and there is no change; there is no help coming to deliver you from this earthly sorrow.

So David here, look at verse 1 with me. Let's just take a little time to look at it in his own words. "How long, O LORD?" He calls on the covenant name of God. We'll come back to that at the end of the Psalm. "How long, O LORD? How long my covenant-keeping, promise-keeping God? How long will you forget me? Will you forget me forever?" and he echoes the same thought with slightly different words in the last half of verse 1. "How long will You hide Your face from me? God, what's up with this game of hide-and-seek. I'm looking for you and you're not making yourself known. I'm asking for your

intervention in my sorrow and you remain silent. My sorrow dredges on into year two, year three, year five, year ten. I'm tired of this. God, where are you?"

So David is on the verge of having lost hope. He is on the verge of giving up and yet he still calls on the name of his covenant-keeping God, he cries out in desperation and once more he brings God to bear on it but he's just being met with silence. So he's feeling abandoned. He's lonely. He's discouraged. He's frustrated and there's no way out. So when you ask, "Why is David sighing in despair?" his heart is groaning from the depths of his belly because God has not acted on his behalf. When he says, "God, will you forget forever?" he's talking about a practical intervention. He's not speculating on God's mental processes as if God in his omniscience had let his chosen king slip out of mind. That's not the point. God has allowed David's circumstances to be prolonged so much that he might as well have forgotten about him for all of the earthly enduring problems that David was facing. "Is this going to go on forever? How long are you going to continue this way?" David is despairing because God has been silent in response to his cries.

Look, you know, this is a really short Psalm; it's a really short Psalm of lament. You get into some of the others and they're much, much longer but just keep this one thing in mind: even though you and I can read these six verses of Psalm 13 in about sixty seconds if we pause in between verses, it takes that long, understand that what's behind this Psalm, what preceded David's writing of this Psalm was a prolonged engagement of seeking God and asking for his help. David was a man of spiritual substance. He wouldn't have been frustrated after just one or two prayers. That would not have justified this fourfold complaint, "How long?" And so this had been grating on David. He had been chafing under this providential discouragement for a significant period of time and God was silent and David was discouraged and so he cries out in despair.

I won't ask but I know you well enough that some of you can identify with just this portion of Scripture. What I want you to see is that not only did David go before you in that element of discouragement that you're facing right now, God himself, the Holy Spirit himself anticipated right where you're at right now and put this portion of Scripture in place for people just like you and me that are feeling that way. You know, it's not true that the Christian experience is always going to be one of high joys and excitement and emotional greatness. That's not true. The very nature of the fact that our world is fallen and we face sickness and eventual death, "It is appointed for man to die once and after this comes judgment," guarantees that that false presentation of what it means to be a Christian could not possibly be true. It couldn't possibly be true. There are bound to be times like this and this portion of Scripture is given to help us and to help us know how to respond.

So in this sigh of despair, David has looked up and said, "God, how long?" Now watch this as we move into verse 2. You're going to see another aspect of this sigh of despair that you can relate to. I might as well hold up a mirror to you right now because you're going to see yourself in this portion of Scripture also. It's not just God's silence that is causing David's discouragement, it's also secondly, his own suffering heart. His silent God has weighed on him and it's his own suffering heart and there's a little bit of a

distinction here from what we've said about the silence of God that I want to bring out. The delay of God has burdened his heart and look at verse 2 with me. He says in verse 2 whereas before in verse 1, he's looking vertically, now he's looking inside in verse 2 and he says, "How long shall I take counsel in my soul, Having sorrow in my heart all the day?" He feels the weight inside of his discouragement and his thoughts are tossing within him. He's thinking through every aspect of the situation. He's exploring avenues of relief and possible resolution and he's not finding any and you know what that's like, don't you? You think through your problems from every different aspect and you rehearse the conversations that you've had. You rehears imaginary conversations. You rehearse the ones that you plan to have. You say, "Maybe if I do this, well what would happen then?" David is taking counsel. He's thinking inside himself and the tossing and the turning of his thoughts and the press of trying to find a solution, the concern, the worry, the anxiety, the frustration has overwhelmed him.

David says, "God, how long am I going to be like this? How long are you going to leave me in this position where I'm just thinking like this because it's wearing me out." Martin Luther said this about David and I quote, "His heart is like a raging sea in which all sorts of thoughts move up and down. He tries on all hands to find a hole through which he can make his escape. He thinks on various plans and still is utterly at a loss as to what to do." So David was just like you and me in that sense. After all of the thinking, all of the analysis, all of the worry, all of the emotion, tossing and turning inside him, he comes to the end of that and realizes that he's no closer to a solution than when he began. The sea had come in, the sea had gone out. The sea had come in, the sea had gone out. And he's still right back where he started from. All of the emotional investment, all of the thinking, all of the analysis left him right where he had been from the beginning. You hardly need a Bible teacher to tell you that that's physically exhausting. That wears you out.

Well, if you understand that feeling of exhaustion that comes from the agitation of your hearts, you've had an experiential introduction to what David is saying here in Psalm 13:2. "How long shall I take counsel in my soul and go about all day long with this sorrow heaving up and down inside me?" But it's more than the inner turmoil as well. It's his silent God. It's his suffering heart. Thirdly, we see in this opening two verses, we see his surging enemy. David's enemies are too strong for him and they are prevailing. Look at the end of verse 2 where he says, "How long will my enemy be exalted over me?" This opponent is not specifically identified. There is nothing in this Psalm to tell us who or what it might have been. We simply have to be content today to know that someone an enemy was prevailing over David unrighteously. This situation threatens David's godly position and God is nowhere to be found.

Now, I want to gather this all up for you and for me too, for that matter, and help you to see and appreciate what David has done here. There are multiple aspects to his discouragement. He is discouraged vertically: God has been inactive in response to his prayers. He is discouraged internally: his thoughts have overwhelmed him; he's tossed and turned and he's no doubt lost sleep over this situation. Beyond that, there are people outside that are contributing to his difficult situation as well. So he looks up at God and there's nothing there, so to speak. He looks inside, tossing, turning. He looks around and

he's got an opponent that is just laughing, waiting for the final blow to fall and David to be utterly defeated so that he can triumph over him. Problems with man. Problems within. Problems with God as he expresses it. You can identify with that, can't you? To one degree or another. You suffer at the hands of unrighteous men. You seek for God. You think through it and think through it and consider every angle of the situation. You're praying as you go through and the situation gets worse? What is this? What is this? What is this manifestation of the faithfulness of God? How am I supposed to understand that in the midst of this chronic situation which is now entering year eight and nothing has changed? How long? How long? How long?

Notice how David responds as we move into verse 3 and 4. I hope that in that brief treatment of the first two verses that you've entered sympathetically into David. Before I get into point 2, I want to say this: you know, over the years I've heard Christians, I've heard some Bible teachers that will look at a Psalm like this and they will presume to be the judge of the Psalmist's character and they will criticize the Psalmist for saying these things. They will criticize the Psalmist for being discouraged. That just can't possibly be right. That can't possibly be right. Do you mean to tell me, speaking to this teacher, speaking to this Christian who is criticizing David, a man after God's own heart. Let's line the characters up in the drama where they belong. You mean to tell me as you're criticizing the man after God's own heart that I should think that I should listen to you and your interpretation of David over simply taking Scripture at face value and understanding that this was written for my benefit? That I'm forbidden from understanding and entering into sympathetically with what he says when I find my own spiritual experience here expressed in the pages of Scripture? Is that what you're saying? Speaking to this hypothetical imaginary opponent or someone who's interpreting the Psalms differently. Listen, if you're going to deal with the Psalms that way, you might as well cut them out of the Bible. That's not why Scripture was given to us for us to stand in judgment of the men of God who delivered the word of God under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God. These things are written to help us. These things are written to guide us not for us to become critics of a godly man who lived 3,000 years ago. This Scripture is over us, we're not over the man who wrote it.

So we need to understand that we are to enter into these things sympathetically and part of the proof of that is that you can relate to what David is expressing in this Psalm. David here, notice that David does not confess any sin here. He's not repenting in this Psalm. He's not repenting because he doesn't have anything to repent over or to repent from. He's a suffering soul crying out to God and the fact that he's crying out to God is an expression of a level of faith that a lot of people don't understand, that a lot of people never find that gear in their spiritual life. But the fact that they haven't found it doesn't mean that it's not there. It doesn't mean that it's not right and this is righteous praying for the discouraged heart.

The other thing that I want to say. I'm just finding all kinds of things I want to say tonight. I want you to think about this too. You know, sometimes you'll hear people say things like, "Well, if you're discouraged, you need to choose joy. You need to choose to be joyful." Well, look, there might be a remote aspect of truth in that but that's really

missing the point. Let me put it this way: if that's all that you say, you're really mischaracterizing the nature of spiritual life. That's just really bad theology and it's really bad pastoral counsel to give to somebody because it tells them that your whole demeanor can change simply by the exercise of the power of your own volition. That's not true. Our minds need to be informed. We need to engage intellectual thinking, our mental processes so that our heart can be reoriented and redirected and then our will can be properly engaged. But to simply appeal straight to someone's volition and say, "Snap out it. Choose joy," is to really lock the door on any help to them. That's not true. That is not the biblical spiritual approach to dealing with a discouraged heart.

See what David does by way of contrast as we move into point 2 which we'll call the summons for deliverance. The summons for deliverance. We saw the sigh of despair and now David is going to summon God for deliverance. He's going to make petition to God to help him and in the midst of his despair, he requests help from God. Here's another aspect of it. There is just so much muddled thinking about the spiritual life that we need 150 Psalms to help us sort through it all. You know, I say this sympathetically. Maybe some of you do this. Maybe some of you think this is the way that you're supposed to pray. I've certainly heard people talk this way. The way that some people pray is they say and you can see it expressed and they'll say something like, "Well, we've got to figure out what we want to pray for." In other words, "We've got to figure out what we want, what the solution is and then we'll ask God to do that for us." Well, please. That can't possibly be right because David has just said in Psalm 13, "I've sought through all of this in my heart and I don't know where to go from here. I'm lost in this situation. I don't know what the answer is. If I knew what the answer was, if I knew when the help was going to come, I wouldn't be discouraged." The whole point is that sometimes God providentially orchestrates our lives so that we don't know what the answer is. We don't know where the light is going to come from. We don't know when change is going to come and we have no idea how it's going to work out. We are pressed in by a weighty darkness all around and we can't find our way forward.

So to think that we're supposed to figure out what the answer is in that condition and then ask God for that, is really to reverse the sequence of the divine order. It doesn't work that way. The whole point is that we don't understand and yet that's what you see people doing, leaning on their own understanding and trying to get God to act in accordance with their own understanding. What a foolish way to pray. I mean, I want God and you do too, I want God to act beyond what I can understand. I want him to act according to his omniscience, not according to my finite mind. I want him to act according to his power, according to his eternal perspective, not what I see with these narrow blinders blinding my vision. I don't know what tomorrow holds and I'm supposed to ask God to sort out this kind of perplexing problem? You see, we're too proud. We're too full of ourselves. We think we know more than we do. We think that we can help God figure it out that he's just waiting for us to ask exactly the right thing and he says, "Finally you've got it. I'll do it that way." What a miserably shriveled way to approach the Christian life.

Now, none of that, just to be clear, none of that is directed at anyone in this room. I'm just identifying principles. I'm just helping you see issues so that we can clear away that stuff

and see what Scripture says and that's what we see in David's summon for deliverance. He does not figure out the solution and then ask God to give him that. No, no, the whole point is that he has thought over his dilemma incessantly and he has not come up with any answers. So his request – watch this, oh this is so important – David's request rather than asking for a specific solution – watch this – it is much more direct, it is much more profound, it is much more basic than asking for a particular circumstantial outcome. Look at what he says in verse 3, he says,

3 Consider and answer me, O LORD my God; Enlighten my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death,

What is he saying here? "Lord, consider." In other words, "Lord, pay attention. Pay attention to me, God. After all this time, after all of this length of sorrow, I'm asking you, please, pay attention to me." In other words, "Have a gracious attitude toward me. Consider me. Look at me in my sorrow. Look at me in my despair and bend your ear to me and answer me, O LORD my God." There it is again, "O LORD," the covenant name of God, "my promise-keeping God. I appeal to you and now that I've invoked your covenant-keeping, promise-keeping name, answer me. Won't you please answer me? Specifically, Lord, enlighten me. Enlighten my eyes." He's asking God to give him a spiritual perspective, give him a divine perspective that will help him going forward.

Look at it again there with me in verse 3, "Consider and answer me, O LORD my God." Notice how he has pivoted away from his discouragement and he's moved into the realm of petition. He's moved into a different realm. He's no longer unloading his heart before the throne of God. He is now asking God for something and what he's asking for, what he's spending his spiritual capital on is not a superficial bit of circumstance. He's asking God, the covenant-keeping God, the God of Israel, the God who made him king, he's saying, "God, pay attention to me," which is far more profound than saying, "God, give me circumstances x, y and z." It's infinitely more valuable for you to have the ear of God engaged with what you're saying than it is for you to have certain circumstances taken away or added to your life. Do you see the difference? At whatever realm of life that you want to put this in – oh, this is so important! I'm saying that for my benefit as much as for yours. Whatever realm of life you may be engaging this message in, at whatever level of your life you're engaging this in: financial, physical, relational, marital, parenting, past experiences, present sorrows, future concerns, where am I going to be in seven months, where am I going to be in a few years from now, what's my future hold? At whatever realm you're personally engaging this message in, here's what you must see and understand, here's where you must train your heart to engage your priorities, here's where you must set your affections: every earthly realm that I just identified, pales into insignificance if God simply will give you his ear. If you have the attention of God when you speak to him, that is of far greater value than anything on this earth, anything in life.

You know, again, speaking from sad, difficult personal experience, we don't learn that lesson very quickly. We are slow learners in the school of God. We're so engaged with our earthly life that we haven't learned to put the proper premium on the fact that God listens to us when we pray and as long as we are engaged in this kind of, "God, iron out

my earthly circumstances for me," when that's what we think the primary purpose of our spiritual existence is, we're really missing the point. For God to get your attention, he has to take that stuff away. He has to leave you in the halls of silence, so it seems, so that you would learn to put the proper value on the fact that you're a child of God and that he hears you when you pray and if you have that, nothing else matters by comparison. If you have that, you have hope. If you don't have that, nothing on earth can make up the difference for you. We must learn to value the attention of God when we pray and sometimes he profoundly withholds blessing from us not to punish us for sin but simply to teach us to value the surpassing greatness of what it means to be a child of God who can speak to him and have him hear us when we pray.

David is illustrating that for us here in Psalm 13. David has that perspective. What's he asking for here? What is his actual petition? Look at the text. Put your finger on the text. See what he's asking for. His request is, "God, consider and answer me. Respond to me. Give me insight or I'll sleep the sleep of death. God, this is going to intervene. Help me before this kills me." So what you see here is the urgency and the language of sincere determination. David is calling on the ear of God and if God would give him his ear and give him perspective, then his sigh of despair would turn into what you see later on. "God, hear me." In verse 3 he says, "Enlighten my eyes, hear me, or I will sleep the sleep of death,

4 And my enemy will say, "I have overcome him," And my adversaries will rejoice when I am shaken.

He's referring back to his enemies and referring to how they're going to rejoice if they see David fall. Now, as always, this is not so much David's personal concern but that he is God's anointed king. It's his position as the man of God that makes this urgent. If his enemies boast over David, it will be as if God himself has been defeated. God's glory will be tarnished and David doesn't want that. So notice in verse 1, he said, "How long, O LORD?" the covenant name of God. He appeals to that covenant-keeping name in verse 3, "Consider and answer me, O LORD my God." And what he's asking is simple, basic and profound: "Hear me. Pay attention to me." He's come to that point of spiritual desperation where the earthly circumstances have become quite secondary to the fact that, "God, you've got to restore to me the sense of intimacy with you that I once had before. That now matters to me more than anything else, O God. I don't care about the earthly circumstances. I'm not going to complain about past things, past relationships anymore. I don't care what happens to my financial future anymore. O God, I just want the sense of intimacy with you restored. If I can just have that, O God, I will waive my claim on everything else, just consider and answer me." That's how simple, direct and profound his prayer is. He loves God that much that all of his other concerns have evaporated. They've burned into insignificance. The silence of God is what he must have removed. "Pay attention to me, Lord."

Now, watch what happens here as we move into the final two verses and to point 3. We've seen his sigh of despair. We've seen his summons for deliverance. Now in the third part here we come to the song of delight. The song of delight. We see a complete reversal

of how the Psalm opened. Verse 5 opens in an emphatic way, "But I." It's an emphatic use of the pronoun. He just said, "My enemy will rejoice if you don't deal with me, Lord. But I," by contrast, "I stand in a different position. I have trusted in your lovingkindness." Look at verse 5. Let's read it together. Put your finger right on the text. It's just so important as you listen to God's word taught that you see the text from which it is derived. It is important for you to see the bases upon which the speaker is giving you what he has said. You have the prerogative every time you hear someone teach the word of God to you, you have the prerogative to have in your mind, "Where are you finding this in Scripture? Show me in the Bible." And if you can go 30 or 40 or 50 minutes on a consistent basis with a teacher who is supposedly speaking in the name of God that you never need to turn to the text, it's time to move on to another teacher. That's why I like to tell you to put your finger on the text. Engage it with your eyes. Engage it with your ears. Engage it with the physical aspect of touch. Engage your senses with the Scripture.

Look at verse 5 with me, David says,

5 But I have trusted in Your lovingkindness; My heart shall rejoice in
Your salvation.

David has vigorously turned to trust here. When he says, "But I," he is emphatically expressing his resolve that he is not going to collapse under the weight of this trial. He reminds himself, "God, I have trusted in your lovingkindness." It's a word that means "God's loyal love." "God, I have trusted in your faithful goodness to your children and as one of those children, I am putting my trust again consciously afresh in your loyal love." And David is expressing something of great transcendent value that everyone of us in this room needs to lay hold of if we are Christians, if we are children of God. We need to take ourselves in hand, we need to, as it were, speak to ourselves, we need to address our own hearts and pull ourselves up and say, "Now you listen to me," you're talking to yourself, you're preaching to yourself. You say, "You listen to me: God is a faithful God. He is a God of loyal love." And you rehearse these things in your mind. "And while this trial has been long and extensive and difficult and wearing on me," you say to yourself, you're preaching to yourself. Sometimes it helps to literally look at yourself in the mirror and say these things. "But despite the length and depth of this trial, there is something more fundamental at play in the universe that determines how I should respond to this. More fundamental is the fact that God is a God of faithful character, he's a God of loyal love to his children and I belong to him through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and that means something. That means something. That means that this weighty trial that I currently find myself in cannot possibly be the way that my life turns out for all of eternity. It can't come out that way. There is no way," you say to yourself, "there is no way that the loyal, faithful, self-sacrificing God that I know, there is no way that the Lord Jesus Christ who shed his blood to wash away my sins and reconcile me to God, there is absolutely no way that a God like that would abandon me to sorrow like this, therefore, I'm not going to live like he has. I'm not going to think like he has. Instead what I'm going to do," David says, "I'm going to trust. I'm going to rejoice." Verse 6,

6 I will sing to the LORD.

"God would never leave me in a permanent state of despair even though this trial has lasted a very long time." David says, "Lord, I have trusted in your lovingkindness." Listen to me, beloved: God's lovingkindness, God's loyal love, God's faithful character is the answer to your question. David in a sense was asking at the start of this Psalm, "God, where are you? Why this silence? Why has nothing changed? Don't you know I'm exhausted by this? Don't you know I'm tired of engaging my own thoughts about this? Where are you?"

Do you know what God's answer to David's prayer is in verses 3 and 4? The answer is right there in Psalm 13. The answer to David's prayer, "Consider and answer me," is found in the character of God. God's loyal lovingkindness, God's salvation, God's power of deliverance is the answer. Sinclair Ferguson said this as David calls on the name of the Lord there in verse 6, he says, "God's name indicates that he is a gracious and powerful, a redeeming, providing and guiding God, a God who overcomes all opposition to his purposes. The very God David needed, David had."

Watch this. Watch the spiritual challenge of opportunity and responsibility this lays before us in verse 6. Those of you that came in here with defeated, discouraged hearts, recognizing that Scripture identifies and sympathizes with you and yet calls you to come beyond that to this point in verse 6. David says,

6 I will sing to the LORD, Because He has dealt bountifully with me.

It's been translated in a past tense. He has dealt bountifully with me. Here's what I think the significance of that is: the certainty of God's deliverance. David says in verse 5, "My heart will rejoice in your salvation." He's looking forward and then yet in verse 6 he expresses that, "You have dealt bountifully with me." The certainty of God's future deliverance for us in our trials is so absolute, beloved, it is so certain to occur. There is no question about it. So much so that you can speak about it as though it had already happened. Look, David had prayed for enlightenment in verse 3, "Enlighten my eyes." Here's what I want you to see, watch this, watch the way the Scriptures are connected together here. What was the enlightenment that God gave him? What's the perspective that is expressed right in the context of this Psalm? The enlightenment that David needed was found in the character of God himself. He did not need a circumstance change. I've said that to you so many times and I'll probably say it a whole lot more. He didn't need a change in his circumstances, he needed to come back to who his God was and find his satisfaction and contentment right there. "I've trusted in your lovingkindness. My heart will rejoice in your salvation. You are certain to do good for me. Therefore I sing. I know, God, who you are. Who you are guarantees the outcome and therefore between the point of this knowledge and the point of the deliverance in between, O God, what you'll find me doing is singing, worshiping, honoring you, thanking you profusely, responding in gratitude."

David said, "God, where are you? How long?" And to that question, "Where is God?" the answer to that question that your heart needs is who God is. That answers the question of

where he is. That answers the question of his silence. He has left you in your circumstantial difficulties. He has brought these sorrows into your life because he has good purposes designed for you in the end. He's allowed your heart to be broken and despaired so that you would look more exclusively to him for your satisfaction, that you would find in his loyal love the answer to every aching desire of your heart. Beloved, 3,000 years later, now on the other side of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ with our broken, miserable souls sometimes, we have an advantage that David didn't have. We look back to the cross of Calvary. We see the eternal Son of God bleeding and suffering on our behalf. We look back at the cross. We see him bearing the weight of our sin, taking the punishment of our sin in his body on our behalf so that the wrath of God, the stroke of his punishment would fall on his own shoulders instead of on us. We say in this is love. We see in the cross the love of God for us and we're so enraptured and captured by that. Our affections are so grabbed by that and locked into that that our hearts are satisfied.

Beloved, if God wants anything else from you out of your trials, know that what he's trying to accomplish is that you would see him, that you would see Christ and you would be satisfied with him alone. When you come to that point of undistracted affection, when you've come to treasure Christ like that, I say it sympathetically but I say it truly in accord with Scripture, the trials and the disappointments and the achings of this world start to recede like the tide going out. It just pulls back and you're left with the satisfaction that Christ knows you by name. That he died for you by name. That he rose for you by name. That he ascended into heaven for you by name. That he intercedes for you at the throne of God right now by name. One day he's coming back for you by name. One day he will bring you into heaven by name. And welcome you by name into his eternal kingdom. And the answer to every longing of your heart is found in the person and work and the career and the future of Christ and that's enough. And that's why we sing. That's why the martyrs could sing. That's why people on their deathbed can sing. That's why our forefathers in the faith could sing.

It was never meant to be about this life and when God strips away life from us, the circumstances that we like and enjoy, then finally we're able to look at him with undistracted attention and find a level of satisfaction in Christ, in him, in the Scriptures that we'd never know otherwise. In light of that, we're not trusting God for permanent ease. We're not trusting him to deliver us on our timetable. Listen to me, I'm almost done here: because these things are true, days and weeks and months and years become irrelevant. They become insignificant. The ultimate deliverance that is certain for the child of God overrides any considerations of time. We serve an eternal God and we've been brought into an eternal relationship with him and that is meant to inform our perspective to such a degree that we can rejoice and sing when men who do not know our God collapse under the weight of it all. That is how we manifest and display the glory of God. We manifest his supreme worth, we manifest his supreme value, the greatness and the sufficiency of who he is when we sing when others rage. We sing. Not in response to our circumstances. We sing in response to who he is.

No enemy, no trial can rob us of our God. No one can take away our Christ who redeemed us with his blood. Oh beloved, do you see it? That's why we sing. That's the answer to, "How long?" When you ask, "Where is God?" Don't think about geography or circumstances. The question that you ask in the midst of your sorrow needs to be, "Who is God?" and when you ask the right question, you get the right answer and that right answer releases your soul to sing.

Let's pray.

O God, we worship you and we love you. O God, your loyal love, the person and work of our blessed Redeemer is so sweet to our affections. Lord, in the midst of all of that, you still sympathize and understand and walk with us through our sorrows and trials leading us not to particular earthly outcome but, O God, in your goodness and in your knowledge of what you created us for eventually, patiently, faithfully over time, you lead us to yourself. As Habakkuk said, "I will exalt in the Lord. I will rejoice in the God of my salvation." That's what we need, Lord. We need to know you.

For those hearts that have been hurting so deeply here that are in the room tonight, Father, may you graciously take this message. As it were, put your finger under their chin and lift their eyes up. Lift their eyes up to where Christ, their Redeemer, is interceding for them in heaven. Lord, assure their hearts with the fact that his intercession for us could never fail, that the outcome is sure. Where sorrow has predominated, O God, one day your love will abound and joy and rejoicing will be our measure throughout all of eternity. While we wait for the fullness of the reception of that great final aspect of our salvation, Lord, we will sing.

Thank you for leading us through deep waters in the past. It's just a token, a down payment of the fact that you will lead us through the deep waters of the present and one day, as it were, deliver us safe on the shores of heaven where time and sorrow will be no more and the greatness of our salvation will be our present and permanent experience. Yes Lord, we rejoice. Yes Lord, we sing. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

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