

Blessed Hope Bible-Presbyterian Church

Prayer Meeting - Balm For the Weary (A Devotional Study of the Psalms)

5 April 2017

Hymns: RHC 353 God Will Take Care of You; How Can I Fear (See below) 334 Sweet Peace, the Gift of God's Love

Psalm 13
From Privation to Peace

1 To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David. How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me? **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? **3** Consider *and* hear me, O LORD my God: lighten mine eyes, **4** 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. **5** But I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation. **6** I will sing unto the LORD, because he hath dealt bountifully with me.

OUTLINE

(1) Acute Privation (v1-2)

(2) Availing Prayer (3-4)

(3) Assuring Peace (v5-6)

INTRODUCTION

We would like to study this evening what it means to trust in the LORD'S mercy. The psalmist sought His God because it seemed that in his current dire predicament reaching the point of desperation, he felt that he had been forgotten by His God.

Perhaps it is because of relationship problems, or perhaps it is because of sickness that threatens our life or those of our loved ones. Perhaps it is due to loss of a loved one. Do we feel we are abandoned by God? This is the psalmist testimony in times of depression and desperation, the feeling is so real. Does God truly abandon His children? No! This is the lesson that God wants to teach His children.

This psalm is the prayer of the psalmist as he wrestled with His LORD to understand his predicament.

Three thoughts as we see the development of the thought-life of the psalmist in the face of a prolonged trial.

(1) Acute Privation (v1-2)

(2) Availing Prayer (3-4)

(3) Abounding Peace (v5-6)

(1) Acute Privation (v1-2)

Psalms 13:1-2 *"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?"*

The fears and doubts in his heart he articulated in the opening verses to His LORD.

- (1) How long wilt thou forget me? (v 1a)
- (2) Forever? (1b)
- (3) How long wilt thou hid thy face from me (v 1c)
- (4) How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having counsel in my heart daily? (v 2a)
- (5) How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me? (v 2b)

Dear friends, when unhappy news reach us, when calamity seem to come upon us one after another, and comes the prolonged period of trial, there is discouraging natural response which verse 1-2 tells us.

This trial of faith that the psalmist is going through seemed so long that he has reached the limit of his ability to keep his composure. He asked God, is this sad state of affairs going to go on forever?

The literal translation of verse 1a is this *“Until when, O LORD, will you forget me?”* The emphasis is on the time factor. He has been in this despondent state for as far as he could remember. It seemed like ‘forever’ (verse 1b). We observe the question “How long” repeated 4 times to emphasis unrest within his heart. He is crying out from his heart. My strength and my hope is perished from the LORD. Like a flickering candle in a strong wind, he struggled in his heart to seek God’s blessing.

Does God hide from His people? (verse 1c)

Due to the harshness and difficult circumstance that had confronted the psalmist, he felt that God is hiding Himself from him. Have you experienced how things seem to go wrong one after another and there seemed to be no let up? God seemed to be so far away in terms of giving favourable circumstances for him! Should we equate ‘good circumstance’ to God’s favour?

The psalmist seemed to have a tenacity, an inner strength, in his heart not to give up although he could not understand the situations that had confronted him. This is the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer.

What a beautiful picture of the abiding presence of our LORD dwelling with His people even when we are at the bottom of our lives. It is a picture of great comfort. Remember in Pilgrim’s Progress, Christian arrived at a fire place in a house where he saw a man pouring water constantly on the fire but it does not extinguish? He was brought to the back of the fire place in another room. There he saw a man pouring oil to keep the flickering fire aflame. The interpreter explained to Christian that the man pouring oil is Jesus Christ. He is the one that pours the oil of grace to keep the heart of faith aflame always even though Satan, the man in front of the fire place keeps pouring water. Jesus is at the back of the fire place, He is apparently not visible to us in our affliction, but He is there sustaining us by His grace!

God does not hide from His people.

His care and love for His children is constant and consistent. He that keeps Israel does neither slumber nor sleep. It does happen when we allow faithless thoughts and doubts to assail our soul.

How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? (v 2a)

Due to the severity of his trial, his heart was filled with sorrow daily. The sorrow seemed not to leave his heart and it weighed him down heavily. And he asked himself, as he searched his own heart, what has gone wrong? Is there something that I have done that has put me in this predicament? He seemed not for he would have repented of them if it was pointed out to him.

How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me? (v 2b)

He felt that his enemies are so powerful and they seemed to have overwhelmed him. He is up against a high wall and there is no way out. As we look at the dark side of things, they seemed to weigh us down. And there is the hope within him that does not as he wrestled with His God for deliverance.

(2) Availing Prayer (v 3-4)

Psalms 13:3-4 "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."

Israel was afflicted 400 years in Egypt suffering as slaves under Pharaoh or to be exact 430 years in Egypt before they were delivered.

Does God forget his people? No! Israel was in bondage. God did not forget them but heard their cry.

Exodus 2:23-25 *And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them.*

How you encountered problems that you cannot resolve? Never despair, men ought always to pray and not to faint, says our Lord Jesus. We ought to persevere in prayer.

The children of Israel cried to their God in prayer when they were in hard bondage in Egypt.

Exodus 2:23 *And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel **sighed** by reason of the bondage, and they **cried**, and their cry **came up** unto God by reason of the bondage. **24** *And God **heard** their groaning...**

This "process of time" is at least 80 years. And the toil and hard labour have reached unbearable levels. The king of Egypt that knew Joseph died and the new King was unsympathetic toward God's people.

"The children of Israel signed by reason of their bondage..." – They signed because their hearts were grieved. The physical and mental torments were very severe and there seemed no escape for them.

This word – “cry” or “קִלַּץ” is a call for help, to cry out with a loud voice, that of crying out in pain or by reason of affliction; it describes those afflicted or oppressed by an enemy, hard pressed, in great distress or strait, oppressed by hard servitude.

This is the same cry of God’s oppressed people in the times of the Judges and how God sent deliverance each time. This word the same word of Hezekiah’s cry to God who heard his prayer and an angel by night to smote the hundred and eighty thousand Assyrian army surrounding Jerusalem. It has the sense of drawing nigh to God in a desperate situation where there is no other help forthcoming.

Indeed, God is our hope in times of affliction. When all things fail, He does not! We can still call to Him. Prayer is the best antidote in times of suffering because God hears our prayers and comforts the weary!

"...their cry came up unto God by reason of their bondage" Prayers does indeed reach our Lord. We are not alone in our trial. He hears and succours us.

When all else failed, God’s people did not fail to call upon their God, they did not lose faith but continued to pray.

God’s answer to their prayer was to send Moses to meet pharaoh to let His people go. Moses was hesitant when called. He asked God, when Thy people ask who sent you, who is your Name? How do I answer?

Exodus 3:13 And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? 14 And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

God is that “I am”, the Self-Existing One, the Uncaused First Cause, the Eternal One, the Self-Sufficient Who has revealed Himself to you intimately. He says to Moses, “I am the Lord God Almighty! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the A and the Z and everything in between, I am whatever you need!”

You ask?

“Where is the truth?”
Jesus says, “I am the truth”.

“Where is the way?”
Jesus says, “I am the Way.”

“Where is the life?”

Jesus says, "I am the life."

"Where is the strength?"

Jesus says, "I am your strength. I am your refuge. I am the water of life. I am the living Bread. I am whatever you need. Put in the blank, fill in the blank!" And God says "I am what you need!"

Students ask, "How do I get wisdom?"

God says, "I am your wisdom." You ask of me!

So, the Name is a wonderful Name! We may not have all the answer, but God says, "You have all of Me!" When you have all of Me, that's all you're going to need.

This matter of our identity and intimacy, we need to see. God is our sustenance, He is our security, He is our satisfaction and our sufficiency. And Moses still did not learn this though he had spent 40 years in the wilderness with God.

We need to refresh again and again the truth of Who God is to us. We are people prone to wander away, prone to live our own life, own self, own desire and we forget that God is the only One Who will satisfy us!

We are sent by Jesus, we are under His authority and we are under God's Holy Spirit's power. That's how we exist and live and thrive in life.

Remember the story of the woman who persisted to go to the unjust judge to vindicate her wrong in Luke 18? She did not lose faith but was persistent and persevered in prayer not giving up even though there was no response from the judge.

Luke 18:4-8 *And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?*

Truly the question is this, our afflictions are often a test of our faith if we will persevere to have faith and trust God even though we see no help in sight.

The faith of men grows weary and they give up hope. But our Lord says, men ought always to pray and not to faint! When affliction increase, faith must proportionally increase. When it is hardest to pray, we pray the hardest.

The psalmist pleaded urgently to a state of desperation with the LORD to show His favour upon him again and answer His prayer. He asked the LORD to let him see the light at the end of the tunnel. We can often see the state of a person's predicament by the look of his/her eyes. Give to me LORD the breath of life, breathe life into me. He gave two reasons. The idea is, that death, whose

approach was indicated by the dimness of vision, was fast stealing over him as a sleep, and that unless his clearness of vision were restored, it would soon end in the total darkness - the deep and profound sleep - of death. Death is often compared to sleep. And lest his enemies rejoice when they saw that he has given up hope in God totally.

(3) Abounding Peace (v5-6)

Psalms 13:5-6 "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."

This is the turning point in a trial. The psalmist reaffirms his faith in the LORD. He said I have trusted in Thy mercy. The mercy of God is the loving kindness and goodness of God.

It describes the compassion of God on His people. The root verb is "love" (*raham*). It is the outworking of God's love for His people. It is derived from the noun "womb". The picture of God's love for His people is likened to the unborn baby nourished in the mother's womb. The umbilical cord supplies the oxygenated, nutrient-rich blood to nourish the unborn baby. The unborn baby is fully dependent on the life-line of the mother. This is how much we are dependent on our Creator, who is also our Sustainer and most importantly, our Saviour. We are lost and helpless, estranged from God, when we choose to walk our own way.

He put his faith in God first. This is what is needed in a trial. It is the critical point and test. May we not falter but triumph by faith. And because he put his faith in God first, he believed therefore he is blessed. He said 'my heart shall rejoice to see Thy salvation.' Has he saw God salvation already? No physically but by faith he saw and he shall receive. Remember when Abraham was asked to kill Issac his own son, this is the same test.

Because the psalmist believed therefore he saw the glory of God in his salvation. He rejoiced to see the bountiful hand of God upon him.

CONCLUSION

May the Lord strengthen the hearts of His people to exercise faith in times of trial to trust in His unfailing mercy! Amen.

How Can I Fear

When shadows fall
and the night covers all,
There are things that
my eyes cannot see.

I'll never fear,
for the Saviour is near;

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My Lord abides with me.

How can I fear?
Jesus is near.
He ever watches over me.

Worries all cease;
He gives me peace.
How can I fear with Jesus.

When I'm alone
and I face the unknown,
And I fear what the future may be,

I can depend
on the strength of my friend
He walks along with me.

How can I fear?
Jesus is near.
He ever watches over me.

Worries all cease;
He gives me peace.
How can I fear with Jesus!