

# 13 | PSALM 13

## DEFEATING DEPRESSION

*Mental health is vital for the Christian. How can we defeat depression and focus on joy in Christ?*

### Outline

#### 1. **OUR SORROW (13:1-2).**

*Definition of Depression*

*Causes of Depression*

In Depression, we ask: How Long? (1)

*We Feel Forgotten*

*We Feel Forsaken*

In Depression, we ask: How Low? (2)

*We feel low because of our Pain*

*We feel low because of God's Plan*

#### 2. **OUR SUPPLICATION (13:3-4).**

Pray When Overwhelmed by Emotions (3)

Pray When Overwhelmed by Enemies (4)

#### 3. **OUR SONG (13:5-6).**

We Sing Because of God's Salvation (5)

We Sing Because of God's Sufficiency (6)

**Call to Worship: Romans 15:13**, “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.” No matter what you are going through, there is hope in Christ!

### *Introduction*

Open your Bible if you will to Psalm 13. The title of our message is “Defeating Depression.”

God tells us to “rejoice always” and that we are to walk in “joy” which is “unspeakable and full of glory”. Yet it is often the case that Christians struggle with depression and despair. But do *mature* Christians at times deal with deep depression? Yes, from time to time, most do! Yet even in David's times in the valley of the shadow of death, he always found a way to worship God. He found a way to please God.

David gives us a wonderful hope in Psalm 13, and here it is: If you know God, you can please God with your depression! You don't have to be a slave to your emotions. You can deny yourself and please God no matter what you feel like! You have the greatest hope in the world.

**Scripture Reading**

Let's stand and read Psalm 13:1-6,

**13:1-6** | Save, **How long**, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? **How long** will you hide your face from me? <sup>2</sup>**How long** must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? **How long** shall my enemy be exalted over me? <sup>3</sup>Consider and answer me, O Lord my God; light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death, <sup>4</sup>lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed over him," lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken. <sup>5</sup>But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. <sup>6</sup>I will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with me.

*This is God's Word.*

*Hope (Little League)*

Brothers and sisters, we are not called to despair and depression, but to hope in the Lord. That's what this Psalm is all about.

I love the story of the little league team that was being beaten badly. A man approached a little league baseball game one afternoon. He asked a boy in the dugout what the score was. The boy responded, "Eighteen to nothing and we're behind." "Boy," said the spectator, "I'll bet you're discouraged." "Why should I be discouraged?" replied the little boy. "We haven't even gotten up to bat yet!"

Listen, whatever you're going through, I want to give you hope. Your depression is for a purpose. But you were not meant to linger in it. You can defeat it if you will patiently focus on the Lord.

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## 1. OUR SORROW (13:1-2).

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The reality of depression and despair in the human condition is undeniable.

*Definition of Depression*

The definition of a depressed person (according to the DSM 5) is someone who "experiences persistent feelings of sadness and hopelessness and lose interest in activities they once enjoyed. Aside from the emotional problems caused by depression, individuals can also present with a physical symptom such as chronic pain or digestive issues."<sup>1</sup>

Physical and emotional symptoms of serious depression can include:

1. Depressed mood most of the day, nearly every day.
2. Markedly diminished interest or pleasure in all, or almost all, activities most of the day, nearly every day.
3. Significant weight loss when not dieting or weight gain, or decrease or increase in appetite nearly every day.
4. A slowing down of thought and a reduction of physical movement (observable by others, not merely subjective feelings of restlessness or being slowed down).

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<sup>1</sup> "Depression Definition and DSM-5 Diagnostic Criteria." Psyc.com.net - Mental Health Treatment Resource Since 1986. Accessed March 18, 2019. <https://www.psyc.com.net/depression-definition-dsm-5-diagnostic-criteria/>.

5. Fatigue or loss of energy nearly every day.
6. Feelings of worthlessness or excessive or inappropriate guilt nearly every day.
7. Diminished ability to think or concentrate, or indecisiveness, nearly every day.
8. Recurrent thoughts of death, recurrent suicidal ideation without a specific plan, or a suicide attempt or a specific plan for committing suicide.<sup>2</sup>

### *Causes of Depression*

Things that can cause depression are many:

1. Physical illness. Often depression can be caused by physical ailments. There are physical things in your body that cause depression, especially thyroid issues. The body and soul are connected, so sometimes depression can be a physical problem.
2. Depression can be caused by poor nutrition.
3. Depression can be caused by a lack of sleep. Sometimes sleep apnea is the cause of serious depression. Without proper rest, the mind cannot function. Sometimes the simplest solution to depression is getting proper rest.
4. Isolation: we all need community, even if we are introverts. God made us to be interdependent, not isolated. Isolation can bring you quickly to hyper-focusing on yourself and your problems.
5. Disconnection from work: either work is too much, or perhaps you are unemployed. We are all made to work.
6. Post-partum depression.
7. Circle of life: Sometimes moms get seriously depressed when their children grow up and they feel like they've lost their purpose.
8. Disconnection from meaningful values: when we start to find our value in work, materialism, or even worldliness, we can quickly become depressed.
9. Getting old: Sometimes depression comes because as we get older, we no longer have the energy we used to have. There is also depression that women experience at menopause. Sometimes it's depressing to lose function. For many men: losing hair is depressing: it's either turning gray or turning lose!
10. Depression can be caused by having recurring disturbing or irrational thoughts.
11. Often depression begins because of a great loss or tragedy or trauma.
12. Sometime depression can begin because of stressful life events, like a major culture shock or change in your life, such as a move or homesickness, a new job, having children or getting married. Major changes can cause a stress level that is unbearable, which causes depression.
13. Depression can begin because of a betrayal or because of a bitterness in your soul.

There are probably many more causes. But the point is, we as Christians are not to wallow in depression because it leads to despair.

### **IN DEPRESSION, WE ASK: HOW LONG? (1)**

David is experiencing serious sorrow. He asks the question: "how long" four times.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

13:1-2 | Save, **How long**, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? **How long** will you hide your face from me? <sup>2</sup>**How long** must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? **How long** shall my enemy be exalted over me?

It seems like he might have asked it untold times. Have you been there? We've all had questions like this where we were in such emotional pain we just kept asking, "How long?" over and over and over again before we heard an answer. When driven into a corner by our circumstances we have all prayed this way, whether it was out loud or in silence. We love David, don't we? He bares his innermost soul to us in this intimate way.<sup>3</sup> David is hurting so bad he is almost listless.

### *Cell Phones: No Answer*

In the day of cell phones, you can usually get ahold of someone, or you would hope. I have a wife and five kids. Four of my kids have phones. That's five phones in the house. Do you know that sometimes I can't get ahold of anyone? You've been there haven't you? You call and call and call, but no answer. That's how David felt.

I can remember coming home once from a long trip, and my garage door opener wasn't working. I banged on the door over and over again, but no answer. I saw the minivan in the driveway and had just talked with my wife. I knew they were home, but no one came to the door. I banged and banged. Finally, I called my wife, and she answered. Everyone was playing in the backyard! Sometimes we feel that way with God. Where are you God? How long do I have to suffer? How long do I have to linger with this depression and despair?

There are times when theologically we know that **God will never leave or forsake us** (Heb 13:5), but we often experience what feels like abandonment. Our faith says: God will never leave me. But sometimes from our foggy human view, it feels like we are totally alone. Join the club. Our emotions will often tell us we are completely alone and forsaken by God. We feel abandoned.

### *We Feel Forgotten*

It seemed to David that God had *forgotten him*: "**Save, How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? ...** (13:1a).

13:1a | Save, **How long**, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?

How swiftly time flies when we are having a good time! We can hardly believe it when we look at the clock and realize that an hour, two hours, five hours have gone. But when we are in trouble—then time seems to creep by on leaden feet. And we cry "**How long? How long?**"<sup>4</sup>

You are not alone dear saint. I might say that right now there are many faithful, godly, dedicated Christians who suffer from the pain of feeling God has forgotten them. He has and will never forget you. He says that he's carved and "**graven your name upon his hands**" (**Isa 49:16**). Why then do I feel this way? I'll answer that, but first let's go to a Garden. The Garden of Gethsemane. There we see the Son of God. His disciples are sleeping, but

<sup>3</sup> John Phillips, *Exploring Psalms 1–88: An Expository Commentary*, vol. 1, The John Phillips Commentary Series (Kregel Publications; WORDsearch Corp., 2009), Ps 13:1–2.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

our precious Lord is pleading. He's not afraid of death. What astonishes him is the thought of being forsaken and separated from his Father.

When we find our selves in our own Garden of Gethsemane, let us remember that *He*, our great High Priest, knows that spot well—the place where it seems as though God has abandoned us.<sup>5</sup> And you must remember, our precious Lord knows abandonment. But also remember this: he was abandoned that I would never be abandoned. He was forsaken that I might never, never be forgotten. He's graven our names on his hands.

### *We Feel Forsaken*

David felt the Lord in heaven had forgotten him. Worse, he thought that the Lord had *forsaken him*. He cries out:

13:1b | How long will you hide your face from me?

Yet, what we think of God hiding his face is merely God hiding the end result from us. He's doing a work in our deepest suffering.

One thing we have to learn is that God is never in a hurry. The kind of work He wishes to accomplish in our souls can be accomplished only if sufficient time is given to allow His plans to ripen and mature. It reminds me of the words of **Job 23:7**, "But He knows the way I take; When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (NASB).

### *Car Manufacturing Plant*

Have you ever seen a plant where they make cars and trucks? Everything is geared to automation. The designers have done everything that human ingenuity could suggest to speed up the process of making a motor vehicle. The flow of materials is timed with mathematical precision, nothing moving out of sequence, even the men and women who handled the elaborate tools were trained to perform a single function, each one a specialist. One person knows how to put in windshields; another specializes in windshield wipers. As a result, cars roll off the assembly line in a steady stream. Yet every vehicle moves at a snail's pace through the factory. It doesn't matter if they are assembling the chassis or putting on doors or installing the dashboard—the car moves along from one process to the next at an exasperatingly slow pace.

I've seen the cars being painted and going from the painting room to the drying room. The engineers who designed that plant knew down to the second how long it would take for the paint to be fully dry; not until that exact moment was the car allowed out of the furnace heat. It goes into the painting process dull and drab. It comes out, after a long while, a gleaming object of beauty. Everything is geared to speed, but at the same time everything is geared down to a snail's pace. A car is not forsaken at any stage. On the contrary, each stage is the result of the highest engineering skill.

Don't you believe our God is the greatest engineer? He's engineering your soul to look just like our Lord Jesus. Our seeming abandonment by God, when we knock at Heaven's door in seeming unanswered prayers, does not mean that we have been forgotten or forsaken. God knows what He is doing. The intensity of our trial is controlled from on high. He has something to teach us. He has an end product in mind. Things are moving forward but so slowly, from our impatient viewpoint, that we cannot see it. But He can.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

He loves you. You are never forsaken. You are never abandoned for one second by your Lord and God. God gave Jesus to die for you. His plan is to put you through the crucible to try you and make you come forth as gold.

### IN DEPRESSION, WE ASK: HOW LOW? (2)

As we read verse 2, we see that David not only says how long, but he feels so low. He David had been brought low by his feelings. Emotional pain is the worst.

13:2a | How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day?

#### *We feel low because of our Pain*

If we have ever been through some great trial, we know what David was talking about. Most of us would rather have our right arm cut off than go through debilitating depression.

If you haven't been there yet, you will be. Job said, "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward" (Job 5:7). David was talking about that knot in the stomach, that lead-weight in the breast that makes the thought of food nauseating, that destroys every joy as a cool winter's wind withers the summer's flowers. We can't sleep, can't eat, can't settle our hearts for anything. Every time we try to get our mind on something else, back it comes—that gnawing ache inside.

#### *We feel low because of God's Plan*

At this point in his spiritual pilgrimage, David was no longer the master of his emotions, *his feelings* had brought him low. He had also been brought low by *his foes*:

13:2b | How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

It seemed as though King Saul was bound to win. He had the means and he had the power. The resources of the nation were being harnessed, not to fight the Philistines, but to hound and hunt David. The heat was on.

David was learning by experience the spiritual side of the law of thermodynamics—the greater the heat, the greater the expansion. Saul was a physical giant. David was fast becoming a spiritual giant.

What was God doing in David? He was preparing him for service. It sure didn't feel like that, but it was true. What is God doing in you during your sorrow? He's **preparing you for service!**

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## 2. OUR SUPPLICATION (13:3-4).

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In the first two verses, David had been crying out, almost incoherently and certainly emotionally. Sometimes we need to do that! But now David turns to God with deliberate, rational, thoughtful prayer.

### PRAY WHEN OVERWHELMED BY EMOTIONS (3)

David's distress prompted him to pray for **light to my eyes** (13:3), a Hebrew idiom indicating health (*cf* Job 17:7).

13:3 | Consider and answer me, O Lord my God; light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death...

**Dim eyes** spoke of physical and emotional weakness. What the psalmist desired was the light of God's face to make his own eyes brighten and restore his mental and physical health (see 1 Sam 14:27). This suggests that the **emotional** and **physical** turmoil of the psalmist went around the clock. During the night he tossed and turned wondering what to do and proposing solutions; during the day he despaired as he watched his solutions fail.<sup>7</sup>

What shall we do when all is stripped from us and we are left with nothing? We must not despair, but we must begin to worship God. That's what David started to do here. That's also what Job did. A wind storm came and took out his home and all his children died in the tragedy. What did Job do? He worshipped.

JOB 1:20-21 | Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. <sup>21</sup>And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

What shall we do when all is stripped from us and we are left with nothing? We must not despair. We must not grumble. Spurgeon said, "O dear friend, when thy grief presses thee to the very dust, worship there."<sup>8</sup> Dear saint, when you are stripped of everything earthly you still have everything heavenly, which is infinitely more. You have the love of your heavenly Father. You have the blood of Jesus that covers your sins. You have the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Worship him! Bless the name of the Lord!

### *Nail Your Emotions to Truth*

When emotions were flying everywhere, David nailed them to the truth that the LORD would answer him and saint, God will answer you. And Yahweh, Jesus is your God, just like he was David's God.

### **PRAY WHEN OVERWHELMED BY ENEMIES (4)**

When David was overcome by his enemies, he looked to his God who had already promised him the victory. Saul was chasing David, but Samuel had prophesied over David and anointed him to be the next king of Israel. When overwhelmed by his enemies, David prayed. Listen to him in verse 4:

13:4 | [Consider and answer me]... lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed over him," lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken.

David knew his prayers would be answered, because he believed the promises of his God and King. He knew God would prevail.

<sup>7</sup> Stephen J. Lennox, *Psalms: A Bible Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 1999), 57.

<sup>8</sup> Charles Haddon Spurgeon. "Job's Resignation." *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*. Volume 42. Sermon preached March 11, 1886. Accessed July 21, 2019. <http://archive.spurgeon.org/sermons/2457.php>.

### *The Checkers Game*

How many of you like the game checkers? I read the story of a man who when he was young, he considered *himself* the world's greatest checkers player. But there was an old man in town who was looked upon by almost everyone as being the greatest. The younger man was convinced that this was because he had never played *him*.

Well, one day the old man was sitting on the porch of his home when the young man went by. The old gentleman challenged him to a game. The young man dusted his hands. He'd show him! They put the pieces on the board; the young fellow made a couple moves and so did the old man. Then the younger player saw an opening and snapped up one piece after another of his opponent's men. He thought to himself: "Doesn't this old man know he can't win by losing men like this? He's a pushover."

Then it happened. Suddenly the old man leaned over the board and—click! click! click! click! click!—five of the boy's pieces were swept away. The man had come all the way down the board. "Crown me!" the old man said. With a crestfallen look the young man crowned the old man's piece. Then—click! click! click! click! click!—with that one piece the old man took every checker the young player had remaining on the board. He learned the value of losing a checker or two as long as he was heading for king territory.

What a lesson there is in that for us today. We can afford to give up a few things in life if we are going for a crown.<sup>9</sup> Before we can wear a crown, we must bear the cross.

### *This World is Not a Place of Comfort*

This world is not our home. We must not think that we are going to be loved by this world. We must not think this world is here for our comfort. This world is a hostile place. It's enemy territory. You may be stripped of earthly and emotional comfort, but don't allow that to lead you to despair. When you are brought down low to the dust, you need to worship, like David did.

### *God's Preparing You for Service*

God's in control. He's got a plan. He's getting you ready for service. He's preparing you for kingdom ministry. He can't use proud people. He resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

### *Losses are Gains for the Christian*

David's losses were gains. David was fretting that the enemy might rejoice if he was moved, that the enemy might say, "I have prevailed against him!" What God was teaching him was the value of being utterly submitted to His will. Then those painful moves in David's life, even when they looked like losses, would be eternal and glorious gains.

Your losses are really eternal gains. Paul said it well in Philippians 3.

**PHIL 3:7-10** | But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup>Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup>and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from

<sup>9</sup> Philipps, *Exploring the Psalms*, Psa 13:4.



God that depends on faith—<sup>10</sup> that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.

You know that losses are gains for the Christian. Romans 8:28-29 teaches us that all that God does is for our good to conform us to the image of Christ. If you have a loss in your life, it's to make you look more like Jesus.

*God is Taking from You All that Doesn't Look Like Christ*

God has a chisel. Sometimes he takes that hammer and hits you with his chisel. It hurts! But like a marvelous masterpiece, each hit takes off what doesn't look like Christ. God is taking out of you what doesn't look like Christ.

David was overwhelmed by his enemies, but he realized that God can use everything, even our enemies, to bring us closer to him. He'll use even the enemies of the Cross to conform us to the image of Christ.

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### 3. OUR SONG (13:5-6).

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David had moved to the final stage of the soul's experience in a time of trial and testing. He had come through tears to truth and through truth to triumph. Some people have wondered how David could swing so swiftly from gloom to gladness. The secret is found in the middle section of the psalm where he gets his eyes firmly fixed on the Lord his God, Jehovah his God. It leads him to sing a song.

What a wonderful gift God has given us. Music! Worship the Lord with music. You don't have to be able to carry a tune in order to sing to your Redeemer and Deliverer. He's worthy of praise, isn't he?

David's song is in three parts: It's a song of salvation, his steadfast love & a song of God's sufficiency.

#### **WE SING BECAUSE OF GOD'S STEADFAST LOVE (5A)**

Listen to David sing:

**13:5a** | But I have trusted in your steadfast love;

God's love is unrelenting. He says in Jeremiah 31:3, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you." In other words, God's love is not based on your faithfulness to him, but his faithfulness to you. The New Testament word for this idea is grace.

*Amazing grace how sweet the sound,  
That saved a wretch like me  
I once was lost but now am found  
Was blind but now I see!*

That's something to sing about! Don't let depression or despair dominate you. God loves you. You must be committed to that truth. Preach it to yourself. Sing about it. Shout it from the rooftops!

## WE SING BECAUSE OF GOD'S SALVATION (5B)

Listen to David sing:

13:5a | But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.

Is this salvation from sin? Surely that is included. Is this salvation from self? Surely that is included too. Is this salvation from Satan? Certainly, that is included. But probably this salvation is also salvation from Saul. David is standing now on the victory side. So can we, for our salvation includes salvation from situations—in the Lord's good time and way.

It's likely that David wasn't delivered from Saul at the time of this Psalm. But David knew God's promises are true! The Bible says in Christ, "all the promises of God find their Yes in him" (2 Cor 1:20).

God promises to deliver you. It's not completely in this life. Our ultimate deliverance is when Jesus comes again. But listen you have everything you need right now for a life of holiness and joy in Jesus (2 Pet 1:3; Rom 14:17).

## WE SING BECAUSE OF GOD'S SUFFICIENCY (6)

All that David needed for joy, he already had.

13:6 | I will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with me.

Notice that David put everything in the past tense: "He hath *dealt* bountifully with me." The change in his situation is so sure David reckons it as already having happened. No wonder he could sing!

All that we have we have already in Christ. We have "every spiritual blessing in Christ" (Eph 1:3). We have "all things pertaining to life and godliness" in Christ (2 Pet 1:3).

There's no other higher goal than knowing Christ, the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his suffering (Phil 3:10ff).

### *Conclusion: Pearls*

Have you ever seen how a pearl is made? It's made in a clam through constant friction. Day after day. Hour after hour. Friction. But there's something amazing happening in that clam.

That's what God is doing for you. Don't let depression or despair dominate you. God loves you. You must be committed to that truth.

Each of us needs to walk in the peace of the Lord. That's what depression and despair and difficulties is all about. It is God's tool to refine you to help you seek peace outside of yourself. He wants to do good to you.

Think of the last time you couldn't sleep. Perhaps you were depressed or sick. Perhaps you had a headache that wouldn't go away. It is vital not to waste your pain and sickness or your depression. Reach out to God and he will heal your heart and soul, and he often heals our bodies to serve him again.

Paul says in **Romans 8:18**, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us."