

From Sinking to Swimming

Psalm 13 (KJV)

1 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, lest I sleep the sleep of death; **4** 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.

The Psalms of Comfort

The fall of 1996 was not a kind time during the life of the Bridge City UPC. Brother Harrell told me at least ten years after that time that everywhere he looked in that church people were under some form of attack. He never has told me the problems that they faced during that time and if the truth be told, I would love to know what the challenges were. But knowing life as I have come to know it, I have a feeling that whether it was 1996, 2013, or even the 80's, life can punch you when you least expect it.

Brother Harrell told me that beginning on Sunday nights in October, November, and some of December that he went into that pulpit with one thing on his mind; comfort. He told me he preached comfort from every single angle he could find in the Bible. To this there are still some of the saints in Bridge City that can recall how much the Word helped them to keep walking!

But that was not the first time he had preached like that, sometime in the 80's the Bridge City UPC was going through a particularly trying time. Brother John Harrell told me that there had been times in his 40+ year ministry there that things were so bad he wouldn't even leave town.

His messages in that time were:

Healing in His Wings
Jesus Is So Approachable
The Foothill Principle

You Can Face into the Wind
Branded by the Marks of Jesus
Chains
The Storm of “Not Yet”
Light Sown
The Father Is with Me
Mysteries That Defy Explanation

If you need comfort and encouragement, there seems to be one place in the Bible that fits the bill. Perhaps no other book of the Bible pours out comfort and encouragement as does the Psalms.

Light and Darkness in the Psalms

Just to take one small theme and pull it from the Psalms is to find great blessing. Consider what we find when we consider the man who has to battle with darkness.

The Lord is my light and my salvation—27:1
The Lord will enlighten my darkness—18:28
God is a sun—84:11
I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed—132:17
The Word is a lamp to the feet and a light to the path—119:105
The commandment of the Lord... enlightens the eyes—19:8
Send out thy light... let it lead me—43:3
Light is sown for righteousness—97:11
Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness—112:4
He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light—37:6
He will keep you secretly in his pavilion—32:7

There are a vast number of subjects that we can seek out when we read of God’s power in the Psalms. The great encouragement is that having an understanding that none of the challenges that faces the saint of God can stand against God’s plan or resources.

Quotes on Psalm 13

“This psalm begins with winter and ends with summer; it begins with low muffled tones of sorrow and ends with a rapture of praise.” – Joseph Parker

“Days of trouble must be days of prayer.” – Matthew Henry

“It is not under the sharpest, but the longest trials, that we are most in danger of fainting... When Job was accosted with evil tidings, in quick succession, he bore it with becoming fortitude; but when he could see no end to his troubles, he sunk under them.” – Andrew Fuller

Psalm 13

David got to this place in his life. There is a connection between Psalm 12 and Psalm 13. In fact, there is a noted intensity in Psalm 12 and by the time you get to Psalm 13 there is a sense of desperation that pours out of David.

In Psalm 12, David feels as if he has been abandoned by godly men, but when he gets to Psalm 13, he seems to indicate that he has been abandoned by God. Being abandoned by God is a terrible matter.

Jonah thought he wanted to run from God and abandon Him, but he changed his mind when he was in the belly of the fish.

Esau fled from God, but when he carefully sought him in repentance it was a terrible thing that he could not find God.

Balaam tried to abandon God by going to see Balak. He found the terrible consequences of abandoning God.

Scattered all throughout Scripture come the pleadings of men, “Don’t hide your face from us, O Lord!”

Forgive me for feeling this way, but I take great encouragement from the fact that the man after God’s own heart would cry out as he did in this Psalm. That should let all of us know that there will be times in our walk with God when we will have the same feelings.

Something to help me remember the flow of this psalm is a helpful outline that Steven Lawson put in his commentary on the Psalms. He divides the six verses under three headings:

David's Sorrow—v. 1-2... His problems put him on his face!

David's Supplication (Prayer)—v. 3-4... His prayer puts him on his knees!

David's Singing—v. 5-6... His praise puts him on his feet!

David's Sorrow

Psalm 13:1-2 (KJV)

1 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?

There are some hints that this has been a trial of sorts that has been dragging on for an extended period... Four times he cries out...

How long, O Lord will you forget me?

How long, O Lord will you hide your face from me?

How long, O Lord must I reason with my soul that is filled with sorrow?

How long, O Lord will my enemy have power over me?

The soul can come to a place where a period of wrestling settles in on us. We all come to this place at some point. Everyone will make the trip to Psalm 13. All men no matter how dedicated or how noble their service has been for the Lord will live in this place.

Various circumstances of life will bring you here.

Has God forgotten? Have the blessings of God been taken away forever? Where are His blessings? Is God punishing me for what I did years ago?

In situations like this, we tend to think that God has abandoned us. Our emotions can get the best of us during times like these. Furthermore, there is a deadly enemy that we must prevail against.

“The devil is the adversary of our souls. He can use our temperaments and our physical condition. He so deals with us that we allow our temperament to control and govern us, instead of keeping temperament where it should be kept. There is no end to the ways the devil produces spiritual depression. We must always bear that in mind.” – Martyn Lloyd-Jones

David’s Supplication

Psalm 13:3-4 (KJV)

3 Consider and hear me, O Lord my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death; **4** Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him; and those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved.

David can greatly help us to see the solution for this kind of situation. He cries out in prayer. Just as we all come to the place where we feel as if we have been abandoned by God, we all must come to a place that prayer pours out of our soul.

There is a fantastic blessing that comes to the man who learns how to “pray through!”

Consider me! Hear me! Open my eyes!

His feelings say that God has turned away from him... His faith says something totally different! There is a huge connection that every Spirit-filled believer needs have this shoved in his heart and broken off!

Prayer makes a difference!

If you can ever come to the place that you begin to engage prayer... as in getting down on your knees kind of prayer. We need the kind of prayer that is prolonged and seeking out the God of power.

David poured his soul out to the Lord and told Him that his enemies were mocking him. “I have prevailed against him!”

I heard a story recently that reminded me of a very similar circumstance in my own life. Years ago, when we would spend a few weeks in the summer at my

granny's house, my papaw and I would play checkers. We would sit at a concrete picnic table under a huge oak tree and spend hours playing checkers and dominoes in the late afternoons.

I can remember the first few times I played him, he would let me win. As time went by it got to the point that I could never beat him, because of his method of playing and I can remember a time that this point was driven home to me. We started playing and I moved and he let me take a couple of his pieces. He moved again and I took another one of his pieces. But with that loss it ended up that this one move set up every one of my pieces so that he could jump all the way to the end line where he would be crowned as king. After that, he moved backwards and took most my men causing me to lose the game. That was not the only time that he did that to me. It was as if he had taken one king and had taken every one of my players. He had learned the value of losing a checker or two as long as he was heading for king territory.

Can you gather in to that and understand it from the spiritual side. We can afford to give up a few things in life if we are going for the crown. Furthermore, God knows what He is doing with our lives.

You can trust the Lord, even when it seems like the enemy may be taking piece after piece of your life in this seeming "game of checkers."

David's Song

Psalm 13:5-6 (KJV)

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.

David moves even beyond his prayer into a place of praise. He can get into the place of praise, because his prayer has caused him to remember something; the salvation of the Lord!

There are a lot of aspects of this salvation that has come to David.

Salvation from sin. Salvation from self. Salvation from Satan. Salvation from Saul.

David is now standing on the side of victory. It does not matter what situation of life that you find yourself in; as the old Mississippi Mass Choir song says, “It’s good to know Jesus! Everybody ought to know Jesus!”

David ushers one more principle in the final verse of this passage; He hath dealt bountifully with me. This means past tense. He was looking to the blessings in the past and found himself filled with a song.

We can do that! David must keep running from Saul for a while longer but despite that, God has not changed. If God can bring him through many dangers, toils, and snares in the past, then there is nothing in the future that God cannot supply the necessary resources to see us through!

I’ve Got Confidence

While we are making appeals to old songs, there is one more that is worth mentioning. Andrae Crouch used to sing a song sometime in the ‘70’s called “I’ve Got Confidence, God Is Gonna See Me Through!”

We get to that point sometimes in our walk with God. Nothing right now seems to be working out, but there is a God who can usher us all the way home!