

Turning ‘How Longs?’ Into Hallelujahs (Psalm 13)

A relatively new Christian experienced a string of difficulties sufficient to almost swamp her faith. A mature sister in the Lord counseled her with the promise: “God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

“See,” the friend said encouragingly, “the Lord knows your limits. All these difficult things would not be happening to you if He thought you could not handle them. The fact you have so much adversity just shows how much confidence He really has in you.”

In frustration, faith, and a touch of humor, the stressed-out believer responded: “Well, I just wish the Lord did not have such a high opinion of me.”

Psalm 13 pours out of David’s heart when he faced more than he thought he could handle. Sometimes, in such a circumstance, David asked “Why?” (Psalm 10:1). Here he asks “How long?” (Psalm 13:1).

How Long Will You Forget?

I could never forget the persons who are closest to me. It would hurt to think they had forgotten me. That’s the pain we sometimes feel when circumstances convince us God has forgotten us. If we were really on His mind and heart, He would have already intervened.

Feelings do not always tell us the truth about God. Jesus reminds us that our Father cannot even forget a sparrow—and we are worth far more than that. (See Luke 12:6,7.)

How Long Will You Hide Your Face?

David has lost a sense of nearness to the Lord. He feels that God has disengaged and disconnected from him. While forgetfulness may be attributed to negligence, hiding one's face appears to be a deliberate act.

Do you feel God himself doesn't want anything to do with you? Whenever your emotions tell you God has abandoned you, your faith must answer: Nothing will be able to separate me from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus my Lord. (See Romans 8:35–39.)

How Long Will I Be Sad?

David "wrestles with [his] thoughts" (v. 2). Like us, he struggles: "If I had only . . . ," or "What might have been if . . . ?" Sorrow lies heavy on his heart. Grief only occurs when there is the loss of something or someone precious. This loss may be a person, an expectation, a more value we attach to what is lost, the greater our depression. We need, like Martha, to believe Jesus is "the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25).

How Long Will My Problems Have the Upper Hand?

David's enemies triumph over him, even as problems often seem stronger than our ability to successfully resolve them. Weakness and loss of control combine to produce apprehension and fear. We wonder if the rest of life will be like this. It's easy to forget "we are more than conquerors through him who loved us" (Romans 8:37).

The Answers

In Psalm 13, God never directly responds to David's questions. He never gives a deadline by which He will act. Resolution to our desperation often comes when, like David, we still our hearts before God in prayer.

Often we must simply leave a matter with God. David states

what he wants the Lord to do—answer, illumine, and protect. (See vv. 3,4.) But then he leaves the issue with God: “But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation” (v. 5). Contrast these words to the opening of this short psalm.

As you pray, the Holy Spirit helps you experience another side to your struggle. It’s not all pain, trauma, or weeping. After a few moments on your knees your perspective begins to change. God’s love doesn’t fail after all.

In your anxious moments keep trusting. You too will find reason to sing, for you know far more of the Lord than David. You will see that God has not abandoned you nor will your problems win the battle over you. Let your “how longs?” be swallowed up in hallelujahs.

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