

Where is God?

Psalm 13



Troubled Times

- ❑ In Psalm 23, David was very confident of the LORD's care for him. Even in "the valley of the shadow of death," David was comforted, because he knew God was with him (23:4).
- ❑ However, David did not always experience the feelings of Psalm 23. Sometimes David felt abandoned (left alone) by God. He expressed these feelings in other psalms. Read Psalm 13.¹

"How Long, O LORD?"

- ❑ David begins the psalm with a series of questions, each beginning with "how long...?"
 1. When people are facing trouble, and feeling as if God is hidden or distant, in what different ways do people respond?² What have *you* experienced?³

📖 "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (*Psalm 22:1a; quoted by Jesus as he suffered on the cross – Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34*)



- ❑ It is important to remember that David is addressing God as "LORD" (13:1a, 3a). In general, David has a strong faith in God, but he feels like God has left him alone and forgotten him.
 2. David feels that his enemy is prevailing over him (13:2b, 4). We are not sure what "enemy" he is facing. What types of "enemies" do *we* face? What types of things make us feel discouraged, troubled, or desolate (alone, forgotten)?
- ❑ David asks, "How long must I wrestle with my thoughts?"⁴ David's circumstances resulted in strong feelings, which affected his thinking, which conflicted with what he had previously reasoned to be true based on God's revelation, thus resulting in confusion and frustration.
- ❑ We often let our feelings do our thinking for us. In times of trial, trouble and sorrow, our thinking is easily confused by our feelings.

¹ We don't really know the circumstances of this psalm. Some believe David was severely ill and facing possible death. Whatever the situation, these types of feelings and thoughts could result from various kinds of trouble.

² Some people may doubt or deny that God exists, or doubt his goodness or ability to help. So they may turn to reliance on self-power and self-control. Others may think they have done something wrong. They may ask, "What have I done to deserve this?" This may lead to confusion, self-condemnation, or despair. Others are willing to "wait" on God, realizing their weakness and dependence on God. They may not understand, but they hold on to their faith. As they wait, they may cry out to God, and express their feelings of desolation (sense of being left alone by God).

³ Perhaps you have doubted God's goodness, care or ability; or felt God was punishing you. Maybe you have felt confused or discouraged, and wondered why God seemed distant. Certainly, the biblical God is good (Psalm 145), loving (1 John 4:8, 10), and all-powerful (Acts 17:24-28; Matthew 19:26). God *is* good and able! Many of our troubles *are* deserved, but a person's trouble is not necessarily a result of his/her own sin, and it is not necessarily wrong to feel left alone by God. Though Jesus was without sin (Hebrew 4:15), he faced great suffering, and at one point cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Psalm 22:1a) as he bore the sins of the world.

⁴ Literally translated, "How long will I take counsel in my soul?" In the Old Testament, the "soul" is the seat of the person's emotions, desires, and will.

3. When David asks “how long?” do you think he sees “light at the end of the tunnel?” or does the darkness seem to go on forever?⁵ How much difference does this make when we are facing difficulties?⁶

📖 “For the joy set before him [Jesus] endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (*Hebrews 12:2b, NIV*)

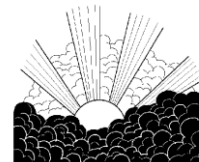
“Answer, O LORD”

- ❑ In verses 3-4, the psalm takes a more positive turn. David’s complaint turns to petition (prayer for help). His focus shifts from his trouble to God and His promised help. David wants to see with eyes of faith. He appeals to God to not to let his enemy win.

“I Trust ... I will Sing to the LORD”

- ❑ The tone of verses 5-6 is definitely positive, even joyful. What has changed? His circumstances? No! However, his perspective has obviously changed.
4. How does David make this change? What does he remember and think about?⁷
5. Based on this psalm, and other Bible truths (and learned by experience and testimony), how can we deal with feelings of desolation and discouragement in times of trouble?⁸

📖 “Let him who walks in the dark,⁹
who has no light,
trust in the name of the LORD
and rely on his God” (*Isaiah 50:10, NIV84*)



Reflection/Application

- How do you handle disappointment, trouble, pain, and suffering? Do you sometimes have feelings of discouragement and desolation? Life in this world is difficult at times! But those who trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior can say this: “The LORD is my rock, my fortress, my deliverer, my light and my salvation. Praise be to my Rock!” Do you need to trust Jesus?
- Brothers and sisters: Trust in the Lord. Pray to Him. Focus *not* on your circumstances or troubles, but on the Lord and His promises. Read and reflect on psalms like Psalm 3, 4, 6, 13, 18, 20, 23, 27, 42, 46, 51, 55, 73, & 102. Read and reflect on Romans 8:18-39. Share your struggles with a trusted Christian friend, who will listen, pray for you, and encourage you.

⁵ ‘light at the end of the tunnel’ – idiom meaning ‘something which makes you believe that a difficult or unpleasant situation will end.’ At this stage of the psalm, light is not evident. He asks, ‘Will you forget me *forever*?’ (v. 1).

⁶ It’s a great help to see ‘light at the end of the tunnel’ because this provides hope, and encourages us to persevere. However, even when a believer does not ‘see light’ in terms of better circumstances ahead, he/she can ‘see light’ in terms of *hope* based on God’s faithfulness. This ‘sight’ is through the eyes of faith. See 2 Cor. 4:18; Heb. 12:1-3.

⁷ David remembers the LORD’s ‘unfailing love’ – His covenant faithfulness (13:5a). He remembers God’s promised ‘salvation’ (13:5b) and His goodness (13:6). We can trust in God because He truly is faithful. His salvation brings joy to the heart. Believers can enjoy God’s salvation now, but the full realization is future (Romans 5:1-5; 8:18-25).

⁸ It can be helpful to express our feelings to God (by audible prayer, written journal, etc.). We should turn our focus away from our own problems (through prayer, serving others, etc.). We also need fellowship and encouragement.

⁹ In this context ‘walks in the dark’ refers to enduring trouble and testing; walking by faith, not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7).