

Theme: In life's dark moments we should express our pain to God and remind ourselves of His covenant love until we move from grief and fear to joy and trust.

## I. Intro - MLK - Montgomery Speech

- A. March 25, 1965 at end of March from Selma
- B. MLK on steps of capital in Montgomery give amazing speech full of historical, poetical and biblical allusions and quotes - Our God is Marching On
- C. Speech ends with a refrain of "How Long - not long"
- D. This is an allusion to the refrain "How Long"
- E. "How long" occurs 22 times in the Psalms alone!
- F. For MLK and the Psalmist before him it is a cry of lament in the face of suffering
- G. Today we will look at Psalm 13 - How Long O Lord?

## II. The Literary Structure of Psalm 13

- A. Psalm 13 is the classic lament in Scripture
  - 1. Laments are a common literary genre in Scripture
  - 2. Most common type of Psalm is the lament
  - 3. Lament - a cry of anguish and despair to God
- B. The basic movement of biblical laments
  - 1. Laments can have 7 parts - you can see an old teaching on Psalm 13 on the web site to hear all of them
  - 2. Few have them all; but all share a general structure

### 3. The general movement: grief to glory

1 How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?  
How long will you hide your face from me?  
2 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?  
3 Consider and answer me, O Lord my God; light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death,  
4 lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed over him," lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken.  
5 But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.  
6 I will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with me. Psalm 13

- a. Laments begin with grief and move to glory
- b. They begin with a plea for help and end with praise

### C. The specific structure of Psalm 13

1 How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?  
2 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?  
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- 1. Three key parts to this Psalm: vv1-2; 3-4; 5-6
  - a. Vv1-2 - protest (the cry of complaint)
  - b. Vv3-4 - petition (the plea for deliverance)
  - c. Vv5-6 - praise (the song of confidence)
- 2. From protest, to plea, to praise; from grief to glory

### III. Psalm 13 - How Long O Lord?

#### A. The protest (vv1-2)

1 How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me?

2 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?

Psalm 13:1–2

1. The protest of anguish: **How Long?** - 4x!

2. Three sources of trouble

##### a. The enemies (v2)

1. The enemy is never named in the Psalm
2. But the enemy is not our own sin in this case - there is no mention of sin or confession in the Psalm
3. Some of the most painful experiences of life are not the result of our sin, but rather that we suffer in spite of trying to walk uprightly
4. Enemy might include:
  - a) Relational problems - enemies
  - b) Relational problems - family and friends!
  - c) Physical sickness (death in v3)
  - d) Financial problems
  - e) Demonic forces
5. Also note that physical and spiritual are so closely intertwined they can't be easily separated. Spiritual problems often lead to physical maladies, and physical sickness often leads to spiritual maladies

##### b. The self - internal thoughts, struggles, fears (v2)

1. Counsel in soul - NIV "wrestle with my thoughts"
2. Sorrow in my heart
3. Presence of the enemy produces struggle in me
4. We have all experienced this - our thoughts become full of doubt, fear, struggle - we wrestle with ourselves!

##### c. God! - v1

1. Where is God? He seems absent
  2. Forget; hide your face - opposite of Aaronic blessing
  3. When are you going to come help me God!
3. This is the dark night of the soul, when we are assailed by enemies without and doubts and fears within, and God seems distant or absent.
4. The apparent absence of God in the dark night of the soul is more crushing than presence our worst enemy

#### B. The petition (vv3-4)

3 **Consider** and **answer** me, O Lord my God;  
**light up** my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death,  
4 lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed over him,"  
lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken. Ps 13:3–4

1. David does not give into the enemies or his despair!
2. In this dark night he cries out to God for help
3. Three request: consider; answer; light up my eyes
  - a. God look on me - not away from me
  - b. God answer me - don't remain silent and let my enemies prevail
  - c. God give me your light - don't leave me to my thoughts!

4. Petition responds to each of the problems in vv1-2
  - a. God look on me - you had hidden your face from me
  - b. God answer me - cast down enemy who is over me
  - c. God give light - remove my inner turmoil  
My eye has grown dim from vexation, and all my members are like a shadow. Job 17:7
5. When we are in the dark night, we begin with honest protest to God, but we must move to laying our plea for help before Him.
6. If our prayer does not begin with our honest pain, it is hypocritical. If it does not move to believing pleas for help, it is simply whining.

#### C. The praise (vv5-6)

5 **But I** have trusted in your steadfast love;  
my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.  
6 I will sing to the Lord,  
because he has dealt bountifully with me. Ps 13:5–6

1. But I - emphatic turn in the Hebrew - but I, as for me
  - a. But I, as for me - the enemies don't but I do
  - b. But I, as for me - I almost slipped, but here I am
  - c. But I, as for me - I look to you Yahweh!
2. But I, as for me, I have trusted in your steadfast love  
5 **But I have trusted in your steadfast love**; Ps 13:5
  - a. Steadfast love is hesed - covenant love & mercy
  - b. The move from protest to praise comes as we remember and trust the covenant love and faithfulness of God

- c. We cry out to God in trust because He is faithful to His covenant - He has come to us in the past, and He will again
3. But I, as for me, I have trusted so I will rejoice  
5 But **I have trusted** in your steadfast love;  
my heart **shall rejoice** in your salvation.  
6 I **will sing** to the Lord,  
because **he has dealt bountifully** with me. Ps 13:5–6
  - a. Note the past and future tenses (perfect & imperfect)
  - b. We can praise God in our present and future circumstances because He has been faithful in our past circumstances
  - c. But to do this, we must preach the Gospel to ourselves - reminding ourselves of God's covenant love and past faithfulness

## IV. Applying the Word

- A. Do I understand the dark night?
  1. We all face times like the one in Psalm 13 - surrounded by trouble, struggling with internal turmoil, God seems silent or asleep
  2. And remember this was not because of personal sin in Psalm 13 (thought it is in other Psalms)
  3. These are the tough times of life - they can be very painful and they can last
  4. We do not always know the reason - but God does
  5. One thing is certain - one purpose is to cause me to cry out to God and draw close to Him in prayer

6. W.S. Plumer - "That is good for us which leads us to pray. It is better to be praying in the whales belly than asleep in the ship."
7. Do I see that the dark night does not mean I have been forsaken by God - even if it seems I have?
8. Do I let the dark night draw me to God in prayer - or do I turn to other pursuits to numb the pain & fear?

B. A proper response to the dark night

1. We begin by honestly laying our our problems, frustrations, doubts, and fears to God - and asking for help
  - a. Laments always begin this way
  - b. Learn from the Psalms - in fact use them to guide your prayer in the dark night
  - c. Remember - If our prayer does not begin with our honest pain, it is hypocritical and vain
  - d. Dark nights are meant in part to drive us to passionate prayer
  - e. Don't waste the dark night! Go to God in fervent prayer!
2. We preach the Gospel to ourselves
  - a. We remind ourselves of God's covenant love
  - b. We rehearse to ourselves how God has acted in the past - how he has faithfully been with us in good times and ill
  - c. We remind ourselves that Christ was forsaken on the cross so that we might not be forsaken when bearing our cross

- d. We remind ourselves that when Christ cried out in lament, God heard and delivered Him - even through death to resurrection!
- e. WE move from grief to glory, lament to praise!

C. Closing prayer of response for those in the dark night

### How Long O Lord?

Psalm 13  
 January 15, 2017  
 Prayer  
 Psalm 20:1-2

Teaching keywords: suffering; anxiety and worry; confidence; prayer

1 May the Lord answer you when you are in distress; may the name of the God of Jacob protect you.

2 May he send you help from the sanctuary and grant you support from Zion. Psalms 20:1-2

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Psalms 13