



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V27 N11 March 16, 2025

PSALMS: CELEBRATING CHRIST IN GOD'S HYMNBOOK

"Psalm 13"

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Prayer

I pray to God to know him, to lay my request before him, and to find direction for my daily life.

"Come and hear, all you who fear God; let me tell you what he has done for me. I cried out to him with my mouth; his praise was on my tongue. If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened; but God has surely listened and has heard my prayer. Praise be to God, who has not rejected my prayer or withheld his love from me!"

Psalm 66:16-20



Is it all right to complain to God?



Psalm 13 is most frequently classified as a *lament* psalm, which one author calls "the prayer of complaint" (Richard J. Foster, *Prayer*, 23). While lament, or using Foster's term, "complaint," is front-and-center in the psalm, lament psalms also contain an element of praise. Generally speaking, lament psalms open with an introductory cry to God and close with a *vow of praise* or *expression of praise*. Sandwiched in between are found a description of the psalmist's lamentable state, a petition for God to intervene, and a confession of trust (see Allan P. Ross, "Psalms," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, 785; cf. Willem A. VanGemeren, *Psalms*, TEBC, rev. ed., 5:58).

In Psalm 13, the introductory cry to God is found in the fourfold exclamation, "How long . . . ?" (vv. 1-2), and the closing expression of praise is found in the vow, "I will sing the LORD's praise" (v. 6). The psalmist's lamentable state is described in terms of the LORD ignoring him and his enemy defeating him (vv. 1-2). His petition is expressed in the twofold request: "Look on me and answer" and "Give light to my eyes" (v. 3). And finally, his confession of trust is expressed in the words, "But I trust in your unfailing love" (v. 5). In Psalm 13, verse 4 contains motivations for God to intervene that accompany the psalmist's petition (see Craig C. Broyles, *Psalms*, NIBC, 16-18).

On the practical value of lament psalms, Foster writes:

"This brings us to the issue of what we do during these times of abandonment. Is there any kind of prayer in which we can engage when we feel forsaken? Yes – we can begin by praying the Prayer of Com-

plaint. This is a form of prayer that has been largely lost in our modern, sanitized religion, but the Bible abound with it.

"The best way I know to learn this time-honored approach to God is by praying that part of the Psalter traditionally know as the 'Lament Psalms.' The ancient singers really knew how to complain, and their words of anguish and frustration can guide our lips into the prayer we dare not pray alone.

They expressed reverence *and* disappointment: 'God whom I praise, break your silence' (Ps. 109:1, JB). They experienced dogged hope *and* mounting despair: 'I am here, calling for your help, praying to you every morning: why do you reject me? Why do you hide your face from me?' (Ps. 88:13-14, JB). They had confidence in the character of God *and* exasperation at the inaction of God: 'I say to God, my rock, "Why have you forgotten me?"' (Ps. 42:9).

"The Lament Psalms teach us to pray our inner conflicts and contradictions. They allow us to shout out our forsakenness in the dark caverns of abandonment and then hear the echo return to us over and over until we bitterly recant of them, only to shout them out again. They give us permission to shake our fist at God one moment and break into doxology the next" (*Prayer*, 23).

Read Psalm 13:1-6

For the director of music. A psalm of David.

1 *How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever?*

How long will you hide your face from me?

2 *How long must I wrestle with my thoughts
and day after day have sorrow in my heart?*

How long will my enemy triumph over me?

3 *Look on me and answer, LORD my God.*

Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death,

4 *and my enemy will say, "I have overcome him,"
and my foes will rejoice when I fall.*

5 *But I trust in your unfailing love;
my heart rejoices in your salvation.*

6 *I will sing the LORD's praise,
for he has been good to me.*

Read another translation

For the music director, a psalm of David.

1 *How long, LORD, will you continue to ignore me?*

How long will you pay no attention to me?

2 *How long must I worry,
and suffer in broad daylight?*

How long will my enemy gloat over me?

3 *Look at me! Answer me, O LORD my God!
Revive me, or else I will die.*

4 *Then my enemy will say, "I have defeated him."
Then my foes will rejoice because I am shaken.*

5 *But I trust in your faithfulness.*

May I rejoice because of your deliverance.

6 *I will sing praises to the LORD
when he vindicates me. (NET)*

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Underline "How long" (4x) in vv. 1-2.
- Bracket "hide your face" in v. 1 (cf. v. 3).
- Bracket "wrestle with my thoughts" in v. 2.
- Circle "enemy" in vv. 2, 4a (cf. "foes" v. 4b).
- Bracket "Give light to my eyes" in v. 3a.
- Bracket "sleep in death" in v. 3b.
- Box "But" indicating *contrast* in v. 5.
- Circle "unfailing love" in v. 5.
- Circle "salvation" in v. 5.
- Circle "sing" and "praise" in v. 6.
- Box "for" indicating *reason* in v. 6.

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. The psalmist cries out “how long” four times at the beginning of this lament psalm. What does that indicate to you regarding his emotional state of mind?
2. Verse 1b contains an *anthropomorphism*. *Identify* it and *explain* what it means.
3. After reading verses 1 and 2, *describe* the psalmist’s situation as you see it.
4. The psalmist’s enemy is *not* identified. *What* does that indicate to you regarding the *application* or *use* of the psalm?
5. The psalmist petitions the LORD for two things (v. 3). *Identify* them and *explain* what they mean.
6. Verse 4 contains “motives, or motifs to motivate God to intervene” (Craig C. Broyles, *Psalms*, NIBC, 17). There are two. *Identify* them and *explain why* they would spur God to act—especially *if* David were author and king.
7. Explain the *contrast* introduced in verse 5.
8. “Unfailing love” translates a Hebrew word with a very specific connotation (see note). *What* is its connotation?
9. Verse 6 justifies the tradition of giving a *testimony*. How so?
10. **Discussion:** The psalmist (David?) had enemies; we have enemies. Given that, talk about the application or use of the psalm by contemporary believers.

Commentary On The Text

One commentator captures the *gist* of Psalm 13 in these words: “This psalm records the cry of the afflicted and therefore harmonizes with several of the preceding psalms. Here David rested confidently on the loyal love of the Lord (v. 5), even though he found no immediate deliverance from the oppression of the adversary, God’s enemy” (Allan P. Ross, “Psalms,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, 801). On its *literary style* another writes: “The three pairs of verses climb up from the depths to a fine vantage-point of confidence and hope. If the path is prayer (3f.), the sustaining energy is the faith expressed in verse 5. The prospect from the summit (5) is exhilarating, and the retrospect (6) overwhelming” (Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1-72*, TOTC, 93).

Psalm 13 is universally identified as a *lament* psalm in which the psalmist brings his complaint to God. The NIV divides this lyric into three strophes or stanzas, each marked off by the extra space between verse 2 and verse 3, and between verse 4 and verse 5. While the psalm has but three stanzas, the three contain six elements commonly found in lament psalms.

The first stanza (vv. 1-2) opens with (1) an introductory cry to the LORD, “How long, LORD?” (v. 1a), which launches (2) the lament proper, consisting of four “How long” clauses: “How long . . . ? Will you forget me forever?” “How long will you hide your face from me?” “How long must I wrestle with my thoughts?” And “How long will my enemy triumph over me?” The repeated use of the rhetorical questions indicates the emotional state of the psalmist—his emotional exhaustion and desperation, feeling like God has turned his back on him. One commentator writes: “The fourfold ‘how long’ indicates the extremity of this poor man’s misery. His strength is well-nigh spent. His patience can hold out no longer. Why has God not intervened this long while? It seems as though God had ‘completely forgotten’” (H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms*, 135). The psalm gives believers license to lament their grief and their foes—whatever or whoever they might be—having the upper hand.

The second stanza (vv. 3-4) contains (3) the psalmist’s petitions. He asks the LORD for two things. He asks the LORD to stop ignoring him, to turn, “look” at him and “answer,” that is, respond to his situation. His request amounts to a reversal of the LORD’s previously described posture toward him. He also asks the LORD to “give light” to his eyes. The NET translates this idiom, “revive me.” Accompanying his pe-

titions, the psalmist includes (4) reasons intended to motivate the LORD to act (v. 3b-4). First, the “psalmist pictures himself as being on the verge of death. His eyes are falling shut and, if God does not intervene soon, he will ‘fall asleep’ for good” (NET Bible, 8tn on Ps 13:3)—“Lest I sleep the sleep of death” (ESV). Second, “Lest my enemy say I have prevailed over him” (ESV). And if David is the psalmist, his enemy is also the LORD’s enemy, since David is the LORD’s anointed. And third, “Lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken” (ESV). The *parallelism* in verses 3b-4 appears to be *synthetic*, each subsequent line extending the thought of the preceding one.

The third stanza (vv. 5-6) contains the psalmist’s (5) confession of trust. Unlike those who do not trust in the LORD’s unfailing love and who would delight in the downfall of the one who does, the psalmist affirms his confidence in Yahweh’s faithfulness to his covenants—especially the one made with him (cf. 2Sam 7:15; Ps 89:27-29). It also contains (6) the psalmist’s vow to praise the LORD, that is, to testify publicly of his goodness.

“In spite of God’s lack of response, David continued to trust in the LORD’s loyal love (‘faithfulness’). He was confident that Yahweh would eventually deliver him and that he would rejoice in the LORD and sing praises to Him. The basis of this confidence was God’s bountiful goodness to him in the past . . . When God is not responding, we need to focus on his goodness. David focused on God’s goodness, and this enabled him to praise God . . . When the heavens seem to be brass and we feel God has departed from us, we should continue to trust Him and wait for His salvation. We can find encouragement by remembering His past faithfulness and goodness to us” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Psalms,” 2025 ed., 81, soniclight.com/tcon/notes/pdf/psalms.pdf).

Word Studies/Notes

vv. 1, 2 **How long** Cf. vv. 1-2 NET. "In a series of rhetorical questions designed to motivate God to answer his prayer, David asked God how long (four times in these two verses; cf. comments on 6:3) He would wait before answering. David felt ignored by God and forgotten. Would this continue indefinitely?" (Allan P. Ross, "Psalms," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, 801). "Since these **How long?** questions are addressed to Yahweh, he is believed to have the power to determine their answer and thus is held ultimately responsible" (Craig C. Broyles, *Psalms*, NIBC, 85).

v. 1 **hide your face** Cf. "Look on me" (v. 3). "The hiding of God's face is an anthropomorphic expression for alienation and curse (cf. 30:7; 44:24; 88:14). The shining of God's face signifies blessing (cf. Nu 6:25-26; Pss 4:6; 31:16; 67:1; 80:3, 7, 19)" (Willem A. VanGemeren, *Psalms*, TEBC, rev. ed., 5:170).

v. 2 **wrestle with my . . .** Cf. "take counsel in my soul" (NASB). "The English 'counsels' or 'thoughts' (NIV), like the Hebrew, may also connote 'worry' Calvin, 1:183, wrote, 'Especially, upon seeing that they are destitute of all resources, they torment themselves greatly, and are distracted by a multitude of thoughts; and in great dangers, anxiety and fear compel them to change their purposes from time to time' (cf. Craigie, 140)" (VanGemeren, 171). "As Luther says, 'His heart is like a raging sea, in which all sorts of counsels move up and down; he tries on all hands to find a hole through which he can make his escape; he thinks of various plans and still is utterly at a loss what to advise'" (J. J. Stewart Perowne, *The Book of Psalms*, vol. 1, *Psalms 1-72*, 181).

v. 2 **enemy** While some identify Saul as David's "enemy" (see Perowne, 181), the psalm does not. "Is the enemy death (so Dahood, 1:77), the presence of evil in the world, or oppressors who have nearly 'overcome him' (v. 4; cf. 62:3)? . . . The precise cause of suffering is obscure because the autobiographical context was less important than the prayer" (VanGemeren, 171).

v. 3a **give light . . .** "This idiom expresses the effect of God's blessings. People relieved from troubles and blessed with God's protection, peace, and favor show their inner spiritual condition in their outward appearance (cf. 36:8-9; 1Sa 14:27, 29). Their eyes sparkle with God's grace. On the other

hand, the experience of anguish is expressed by the dimness of the eyes (cf. 6:7; 38:10)" (VanGemeren, 172; see also A. A. Anderson, *Psalms 1-72*, NCBC, 129).

v. 3b **I will, my enemy will** "These motivational clauses respond to the 'How long?' phrases in verses 1, 2. They describe the consequence of God's forgetting, 'Lest I sleep in death,' and 'lest my enemy say, 'I have overcome him,' as well as the speaker's struggle and the enemy's triumph. These motives add a note of urgency to the request for intervention. They suggest that anything but speedy action will be too late" (Broyles, 86).

v. 4 **But** "Verse 5 is a confession of trust, but it also argues that God should intervene on the worshiper's behalf. The opening but connect it to the preceding motif by way of contrast. In other words, 'unlike those who would rejoice over the downfall of one who trusts in your love, I am of the sort who would rejoice in your salvation.' This confession of trust thus also exemplifies the contrasting character of the worshiper" (Broyles, 86).

v. 5 **unfailing love** The Heb. term *hesed* is also translated "covenant love," "steadfast love," or "loving-kindness." It connotes the LORD's (i.e., Yahweh's) loyalty to his covenant promises made to the patriarchs. "It summarizes all that the Lord covenanted to show to Israel (see Dt 7:9, 12), as well as to David and his dynasty (see 89:24, 28, 33, 49; 2Sa 7:15; Isa 55:3)" (The NIV Study Bible, note on Ps 6:4).

v. 5 **salvation** Here "salvation" connotes deliverance from the psalmist's enemy, i.e., "your saving help (see on 35:3)" (Anderson, 130). "While the Hebrew text indicates the trust is a present reality ('I have trusted,' Hb. perfect), [v. 4] the rejoicing is probably future . . . 'my heart will rejoice,' or more likely as a wish, 'May my heart rejoice'" (Broyles, 86).

v. 6 **sing, praise** "In the vow of praise, the speaker promises to praise God, at a public offering of a *todah* [testimony], or thanksgiving sacrifice, once he has been delivered" (Broyles, 17).

4

APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL POINT OF THE LESSON

When your situation seems hopeless, bring your complaint to God to deliver you, trusting in his unfailing love.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



PARENT CONNECTION

A comedian told a story about talking on the phone to her best friend for hours. After she hung up, her husband complained about how long they were jabbering away with their gossip and nonsense. When she immediately picked up the phone to dial her friend back, her husband asked what more she had to say. "First of all, I have to tell her about that..." When we have a complaint about life, we often head straight to another person. We pour out our list of woes and vent away. Though we might feel better by transferring our burdens, we inevitably come to understand that this is futile. By complaining to another person, we unload on someone with zero authority to make changes in our life. What do we think they can do about it? Rather than taking our troubles to outside sources, let's take them to the One with the power and authority to move mountains. I get that it feels wrong to complain to God. But He knows what's in your heart and your words before you speak them (Ps 139:4), so why not just go to Him? In practicing the discipline of lamenting, we draw closer to God and deepen our relationship with Him. We shift our focus to His Word and His ways and learn to trust Him as we surrender to His will. Let's help our kids learn this discipline as well. Next time they say, "It's not fair!" or come to you with a complaint, help them first give their feelings to God. Help them travel the movements of surrender, trust, and spiritual growth. We're praying for you!

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Psalm 13.

1. What is David complaining about in verses 1 and 2?
2. What is David asking God to do in verses 3 and 4?
3. In what/whom does David trust in verse 5-6?

What Do You Think?

Is it wrong to complain to God?
Why or why not?

What Do You Do?

This week, when you are feeling frustrated, lonely, or sad, tell Jesus about it before anyone else. Write in your journal, pray, or sing a song of lament.

CORE COMPETENCY: Prayer

I talk to God so I can know Him, ask Him for things and find out what He wants me to do.

MEMORY VERSE: James 1:2-4

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."

KidPIXCOUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- I completed my Bible Study
- I memorized this week's verse
- I brought my Bible to church
- I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)

I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)

I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)

I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)

I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)

I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)

I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)

I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)

I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)

I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)

I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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BIBLE CHURCH**

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OUR MISSION
Making God known by making disciples who are changed by God to change their world.