



WHEN GOD DELAYS

Psalm 13.

I'd like to start by looking at part of the life of David – who became King David – and part of the genealogical line of Jesus.

He started out as a shepherd boy, was then anointed by Samuel to become King; killed Goliath with a slingshot, became part of King Saul's kingdom; married Saul's daughter; became close friends with Jonathan, Saul's son; then had to flee for his life as Saul became jealous.

David had been a fugitive for around 8 or 9 years and he also had gotten himself into a number of personal entanglements. For those years, David lived in fields, caves and deserts.

He then settled in a place called Ziklag, where he managed to live in peace for around 16 months before the city was invaded while David was on a military mission and all the wives and children of his soldiers had been carried away, including David's wife and children.

The soldiers then turned on David who once again had to flee for his life. Out of the pain in his heart, he cried out to the Lord. And out his desperation came the incredible words of Psalm 13:1-4.

How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?
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?
Look on me and answer, LORD my God.
Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death,
and my enemy will say, "I have overcome him,"
and my foes will rejoice when I fall.

David was physically exhausted and emotionally depressed. He simply could not go on. Maybe you are feeling a bit like David at the moment – saying – Lord are we there yet? How much longer? In this Psalm, David feels overwhelmed, like trouble is following him wherever he goes and he cannot find any solution. Many times David claimed that God was too slow to act on his behalf.

We have been in various stages of lockdown since March and we maybe saying, what David was – God when will this end? David was faithful to God and trusted wholeheartedly in Him, but he felt the pressure of his problems as much as anyone. Instead of giving up or giving in, however, David held on to his faith.

Sometimes when God delays, we may feel like He has forgotten us. This is a common experience. We all pass through a dark stage of feeling that God either isn't there at all or at the very least, He has forgotten us. Nothing can be further from the truth.

As I read from **Isaiah 49:14-16** I would like you to turn your hands facing upwards and look at your palms. Jerusalem was saying – the Lord has deserted us, the Lord has forgotten us. Never! Can a mother forget her nursing child? Can she feel no love for the children she has borne? But even if that were possible, I, the Lord your God will never forget you. See I have written your name on the palms of My hands. Always in my mind. Can you imagine God's palms – obviously quite large – having your name written on it, in permanent ink so it can never be erased. How can we ever feel like God has abandoned or deserted us, just because our times of trouble seem longer than we would like.

David was feeling forgotten, almost calling out the words – My God, My God, why have You forsaken me. You might recognise those words. Jesus said them in His anguish on the cross. Do you know where Jesus got those words? He pulled them from **Psalms 22**. This Psalm is called a Messianic Psalm, looking ahead to Israel's long-promised hero and deliverer. It foretells the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving details of the torture and excruciating pain of crucifixion centuries before that method of execution was even invented.

It is helpful to know that David suffered and felt forsaken. But it's life-changing to realize that even Jesus Himself – the Lord of Heaven and Earth, enclosed in flesh – experienced the same emotions. The next time you feel forsaken, lift up your voice to Almighty God – He hears your prayers. But today you may wish to say to God – look God, I'm really upset. I have been praying about this situation for years, for months, for days.

It doesn't seem as if You are there. David felt exactly the same – saying to God how long must I wrestle with these thoughts and sorrows? Just like David, you may be saying – everyday I go through this. Everyday I must deal with this.

Someone said that the problem with life is that it is so daily. Every morning we must rise and face our challenges – and the same ones are there every day, rain or shine, summer, autumn, winter or spring. Whatever we have to deal with, when we get up and reboot our minds, all the same crises take up right where they left us.

This was David's plight – he was a King in waiting. He had already been anointed by Samuel as the king of Israel back in his days as a shepherd. David's anointing and the moment he actually became king was 15 years. You sure need a lot of patience to wait that long. And just like some of us today, David experienced his black days – wondering how he could ever go on.

But David had faith and even during his times of desolation and despair, he prayed. Now we can look up various prayers on google or get them in books – and that is okay – but the most genuine prayer, the truest prayer is a spontaneous outpouring of honesty and need from the souls' foundation. In calm times, we may say a pray – but in desperate times, this is when we truly pray.

Three great fears moved David to his knees – he feared death, defeat and disgrace. You may be like David, and your prayers may be – Lord, I can't get through another day without You. I can't make it through these next hours without You.

David prayed three prayers in verse 3 – Lord look on me – don't turn Your back on me anymore. Turn around and look at me and see me. Lord, hear me – hear what I am saying. Lord, give light to my eyes – this means, Lord put the light back in my eyes. When someone is depressed and struggling, you can often notice that the light of hope has gone from their eyes. And this was what David was experiencing.

In the Hebrew David addresses the Lord as Jehovah Elohim. Jehovah reflects God's promises; Elohim reflects God's power. David is saying – God of power and promise I appeal to you. Notice let's read verse 5 – David's heart suddenly returns to the conviction that the God who promises is the God who is powerful, who can stand behind His promises. David's faith rebounds and reasserts itself.

But I trust in your unfailing love;
my heart rejoices in your salvation.
I will sing the LORD's praise,
for he has been good to me.

We can find tremendous hope of victory in the midst of the deepest pit that life can drop us into. But it is not a simple process. There is no guaranteed formula for hope in the midst of suffering. It takes absolute, fall on your face humility and genuine, gut-wrenchingly honest prayer. We must come to the point where we hear ourselves say – Lord God, my life is devastated.

Our Lord is changeless. He has been mighty in the past and that has not changed. He has been loving and full of blessing and that has not changed. He has had a plan for David and that has not changed either.

David has remembered these things and he sings with joy – God, You have delivered me.

But has God delivered him from his plight – no, but David’s heart and mind has seen blessed deliverance and he has claimed the promise of God. He proclaims in advance with the conviction of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen – God has delivered me.

We may be feeling trapped and hemmed in because of this pandemic. That is our first impulse. And it can block our view behind us and ahead of us. We need perspective. We can’t change the future until it arrives, but we can gain wisdom from the past.

You can demand all the answers, neatly gift-wrapped. You can insist that God quickly resolves every trial and injustice in your life. You can hold out for the world and your life within it, to become suddenly fair and rational, though they’ve never been so in the first place.

Or you can choose to lift up your eyes to the heavens, pour out your tears and grief and anger and say in the very midst of them – God, I have no clue what this crisis is all about but I resolve to put my trust in You and I will praise You with all of my heart, unconditionally.

Psalm 28:7 says – the Lord is my strength and my shield, my heart trusts in Him and He helps me. My heart leaps for joy and with my song I praise Him.