

## Lament Psalms

*When life is hard and God seems far away – Psalm 13*

### Seeing and Understanding – an exposition

This little poem has three movements to it, each of two verses. Listen to a fourfold chant in v.1-2 “How long”? Read the words aloud, softly and slowly. What tone and feel do you sense in these words? Do you hear pain and anguish? This first movement is arranged in typical fashion of a lament. David organizes his thoughts around three “people”. He begins with You; referring to God. He continues with “I” referring to himself. He then talks about his enemy.

#### **You Vv.1-2**

He describes his view of God in three shocking and descending ways.

#### **Forgot me**

When life is hard and God seems far away, his first complaint was that God had forgotten him. His attention was diverted and he was no longer understanding of David’s situation.

#### **Forgot me forever**

The second way David describes how he is viewing God is with the word “forever”. He is implying that this season of difficulty and distance might last forever. Out of sight; out of mind is David’s assessment of himself with respect to God. And this “out of sight; out off mind” will never end.

#### **Hid your face from me**

The last way David talks about his plight is to use a word picture. He said that God had hidden his face from him. This clearly implies that David believed that God not merely had his attention elsewhere, but that he deliberately was avoiding him.

The point of the first movement is to suggest that there may come, even in the life of the believer, the feeling that God has forgotten. David said, long before our experiences in life, “God has forgotten; God has turned away”.

## I V.2a,b

If verse one described David’s problem by talking about God, verse two describes the problem by talking about himself. Here in v.2 he is describing the effects of believing that God had forgotten him intentionally.

### Must take counsel in my soul

David believes that he is forced to rely only upon himself. And we notice that sorrow upon sorrow increases as we think we have the resources needed to forge ahead when gripped by grief.

## Enemy v.2c

### Exalting over David

David, we’ve noticed, structures his lament around his view of God (v.1), the resulting state of himself (v.2a,b) and now we see him describing his enemy.

Now before we leave this first movement and his description of his problem (Vv.1-2), there is one curious item that remains. Did you notice a break of logic?

There is something quite ironic occurring in these verses. What do we see David doing? David is praying to His God.

## The Petition Vv.3-4

The second movement of this Psalm serves as an essential transition between the lament of vv.1-2 and the praise of vv.5-6. This central section is the petition.

### Hear me!

#### How he prays

Once again we have a typical pattern found in laments. There is a scream to God to hear followed by a call for Him to save.

#### Earnestly

First we should notice how David prays. When he is crying out to be heard and to be saved He says, “O LORD, my God”. This is his emotional confession of trust. It is given even in the midst of his despair. The God who has “forgotten him” is the only God there is. The Lord, who has turned His back, is Yahweh alone. To whom else can we turn? It is always true that only He has life-giving grace.

David’s prayer is impassioned. It is also trusting and hoping even amid despair. This is how our prayers must ascend to our Lord and God. We mustn’t mumble a few words or perform traditional and ritual prayer. We must be real. We must be ardent. We must remember that the promise-making, promise-keeping God whose name is Yahweh is our only hope. When life is hard and God seems far away, trustingly we must come to Him in prayer.

### **Intentionally**

The other thing I think is significant for us in vv.3-4 is to notice that David prays not only earnestly but intentionally. David strengthens his petition by placing a reason before the Lord to compel Him to respond.

There are actually three reasons why David believes God should answer his petition. 1. He will die. 2. His enemy will believe that he has won the victory. 3. The enemy’s god (who is no god) will have prevailed over Yahweh (who is God alone). Here, David’s case becomes one of vindicating God’s character. The Bible says, “For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another” (cf. Isa.48:11).

### **Help me!**

#### **What he prays**

The request is “light up my eyes” (v.3b)

The problem of a “forgetting God” is not found in God but is in our view of Him. . We need Him to “light up our eyes”. We need to have our eyes (the eyes of our heart; cf. Eph.3:14ff) refocused on the character of our God. The spiritual cataracts must be removed. We need to pray for a new view of Him; an accurate sight of His faithfulness.

## **The Praise      Vv.5-6**

Vv.5-6 could not present a stronger contrast with the mood of the preceding section. The change of tone is noticed first in the phrase, “But I” found in v.5a. This clearly signals a distinct change in mood. The only explanation is that God has answered the prayer of David. He has “lit up his eyes” by providing a fresh view of His character.

### **But I...shall rejoice      Vv.5-6**

David has not yet been delivered from his trouble. Nevertheless, he has learned a new level of trusting response to the Lord in hardship.

#### **He cannot forget**

His love never fails (Lam.3:22,23; Isa.49:14ff)! And it is at this time that he “lights up our eyes” so that we see Him afresh.

#### **And so, I will trust and praise**

And when we see Him afresh, He restores our obedience to Him. And the restoration of obedience is demonstrated in vv.5b-6.

REMEMBER six truths:

1. Life is hard.
2. When God seems unfaithful, know what is happening.
3. In the midst of trouble pray.
4. Pray earnestly and consistently for the eyes of your heart to be enlightened.
5. In the midst of trouble trust. Jesus is our *Hesed*!
6. Look forward to THE DAY when praise returns...unending and ever-increasing!