

FROM SORROW TO SINGING

Thursday, February 8

Reading: Psalm 13

Psalm 13:1 *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,*

The 18th-century poet William Cowper is probably best remembered for several quotations that have become part of our thinking: “Variety is the spice of life” and “God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform; He plants His footsteps in the sea, and rides upon the storm.” He also authored many hymns with his friend John Newton. What you may not know about Cowper is that he had severe battles with depression his entire life. He once wrote to his friend Newton that he always seemed to be “scrambling in the dark, among rocks and precipices, without a guide.”¹

We can all relate to David’s cry in Psalm 13:1 - “How long, LORD? Will You forget me forever?” Many saints have struggled with times of depression. Both Moses (Numbers 11) and Elijah (1 Kings 19) got so overwhelmed that they prayed for God to take their life! David is in this type of sorrow when he writes Psalm 13. We often think of the Psalms as mainly songs of praise. But there are many cries of lament where God felt far away. This is a prime example of a lament psalm.

First, David questions God (13:1-2). Some people think that to question is a lack of faith. But asking questions with a humble spirit and repentant heart is sometimes the only way to work through our emotions and begin to see God more clearly.

Second, David wrestled with God (13:2-4). David was trying to see how the triumph of his enemies could bring glory to God. He asks God to “give light to my eyes” so he could understand God’s purpose in his pain. Sometimes prayer can be a wrestling match as we try to understand how our suffering fits into God’s purpose and plan.

Third, David reaffirmed his trust in God (13:5-6). This is where all the questions and wrestling must lead us. David put his trust in the love of God that would never let him down. This led him to inward rejoicing over the Lord’s salvation. Finally, his trust led him to the outward singing of the Lord’s praise. Through prayer, he had been changed from the inside out. Why had David finally reached this point? He sums it all up in one line - “For He has been good to me.”

Where are you at right now? Are you at the beginning of this psalm trying to figure out why you are going through this difficult time? Or are you at the end of the psalm where your trust in God, even if you don’t have all the answers, brings you the joy of the Lord?

Wherever you are in the process, keep the end goal in mind. God wants to transform your sorrow into singing!

¹ Read Cowper’s story @ <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/insanity-and-spiritual-songs-in-the-soul-of-a-saint>