

For the Chief Musician. A Psalm by David.

PSALM 13: 1 How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?

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This Psalm contains the sentiments of an afflicted soul that earnestly desires succor from the Lord. The psalmist complains of delay, Psa 13:1-3; prays for light and comfort, because he finds himself on the brink of death, Psa 13:3; dreads the revilings of his enemies, Psa 13:4; anticipates a favorable answer, and promises thanksgiving, Psa 13:5, Psa 13:6.

There is nothing particular in the inscription. The Psalm is supposed to have been written during the captivity, and to contain the prayers and supplications of the distressed Israelites, worn out with their long and oppressive bondage.

Verse 1

How long wilt thou forget me - The words אנה עד ad anah, to what length, to what time, translated here how long? are four times repeated in the two first verses, and point out at once great dejection and extreme earnestness of soul.

Hide thy face from me? - How long shall I be destitute of a clear sense of thy approbation?

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PSALM 13: 2 How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart every day? How long shall my enemy triumph over me?

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Verse 2

Take counsel in my soul - I am continually framing ways and means of deliverance; but they all come to naught, because thou comest not to my deliverance. When a soul feels the burden and guilt of sin, it tries innumerable schemes of self-recovery; but they are all useless. None but God can speak peace to a guilty conscience.

Mine enemy be exalted - Satan appears to triumph while the soul lies under the curse of a broken law.

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PSALM 13: 3 Behold, and answer me, LORD, my God. Give light to my eyes, lest I sleep in death;

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Verse 3

Consider and hear me - Rather, answer me. I have prayed; I am seeking thy face I am lost without thee; I am in darkness; my life draws nigh to destruction; if I die unforgiven, I die eternally. O Lord my God, consider this; hear and answer, for thy name's sake.

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PSALM 13: 4 Lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed against him"; Lest my adversaries rejoice when I fall.

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Verse 4

Let mine enemy say - Satan's ordinary method in temptation is to excite strongly to sin, to blind the understanding and inflame the passions; and when he succeeds, he triumphs by insults and reproaches. None so ready then to tell the poor soul how deeply, disgracefully, and ungratefully it has sinned! Reader, take heed.

When I am moved - When moved from my steadfastness and overcome by sin. O what desolation is made by the fall of a righteous soul! Itself covered with darkness and desolation, infidels filled with scoffing, the Church clad in mourning, the Spirit of God grieved, and Jesus crucified afresh, and put to an open shame! O God, save the pious reader from such wreck and ruin!

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PSALM 13: 5 But I trust in your loving kindness. My heart rejoices in your salvation.

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Verse 5

But I have trusted in thy mercy - Thou wilt not suffer me to fall; or if I have fallen, wilt thou not, for his sake who died for sinners, once more lift up the light of thy countenance upon me? Wilt thou not cover my sin?

My heart shall rejoice in thy salvation - There is no true joy but of the heart; and the heart cannot rejoice till all guilt is taken away from the conscience.

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PSALM 13: 6 I will sing to the LORD, because he has been good to me.

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Verse 6

I will sing unto the Lord - That heart is turned to God's praise which has a clear sense of God's favor.

Because he hath dealt bountifully with me - כי גמל עלי ki gamel alai, because he hath recompensed me. My sorrows were deep, long continued, and oppressive, but in thy favor is life. A moment of this spiritual joy is worth a year of sorrow! O, to what blessedness has this godly sorrow led! He has given me the oil of joy for the spirit of heaviness, and the garments of praise for mourning.

The old MS. Psalter, which I have so frequently mentioned and quoted, was written at least four hundred years ago, and written probably in Scotland, as it is in the Scottish dialect. That the writer was not merely a commentator, but a truly religious man, who was well acquainted with the travail of the soul, and that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ which brings peace to the troubled heart, is manifested from various portions of his comment. To prove this I shall, I think I may say, favor the reader with another extract from this Psalm on the words, "How long wilt thou forget me," etc., Psa 13:1. I have only to observe that with this commentator a true penitent, one who is deeply in earnest for his salvation, is called a "perfyte man"; i.e., one wholly given up to God.

How lang lord for getes thu me in the endyng? How lang o way turnes thou thi face fro me? The voice of haly men that covaytes and yernes the comyng of lehu Crist, that thai might lyf with hym in ioy; and pleynaud them of delaying. And sais, Lord how lang for getes the me in the endyng? That I covayte to haf and hald. That es how lang delays thu me fra the syght of lehu Crist, that es ryght endyng of myn entent. And how lang turnes thu thi face fra me? that es, qwen wil thu gif me perfyte Knawing of the? This wordes may nane say sothly, bot a perfyte man or woman, that has gedyrd to gydir al the desyres of thair Saule, and with the nayle of luf fested them in lehu Crist. Sa them thynk one hour of the day war our lang to dwel fra hym; for them langes ay til hym; bot tha that lufs noght so, has no langyng that he come: for thair conscience sais thaim, that thai haf noght lufed hym als that suld have done."

The language of true Christian experience has been the same in all times and nations. "But he that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love;" and to such this is strange language.