

# PSALM 13

## INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 13

### *To the chief Musician, a Psalm of David*

According to Theodoret this psalm was written by David, not when he fled from Saul, but from Absalom; and gives this reason for it, what happened to him from Saul was before his sin, and therefore he could speak with great boldness; but what befell him from Absalom was after it, and therefore mourning and groans were mixed with his words.

**Ver. 1.** *How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? for ever?* etc.] When God does not immediately deliver his people from their enemies, or help them out of an affliction; when he does not discover his love, communicate his grace, apply the blessings and promises of his covenant as usual; and when he does not visit them in his usual manner, and so frequently as he has formerly done, they are ready to conclude he has forgotten them; and sometimes this continues long, and then they fear they are forgotten for ever; and this they cannot bear, and therefore expostulate with God in a querulous manner, as the psalmist does here; but this is to be understood not in reality, but in their own apprehension, and in the opinion of their enemies; God never does nor can forget his people; oblivion does not fall upon him with respect to common persons and things; and much less with respect to his own dear children, for whom a special book of remembrance is written; (see Gill on “~~1998~~ Psalm 9:18”);

*how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?* his love, and the manifestation of it, from his person; his gracious presence, the light of his smiling countenance, which sometimes God hides or withdraws from his people by way of resentment of their unbecoming carriage to him; and which is very distressing to them, for they are apt to imagine it is in wrath and hot displeasure, when he still loves them, and will with everlasting kindness have mercy on them; (see ~~2387~~ Isaiah 8:17 59:2 54:7-10). The Targum renders it, “the glory of thy face”.

**Ver. 2.** *How long shall I take counsel in my soul,* etc.] Or “put it”<sup>f217</sup>; to take counsel of good men and faithful friends, in matters of moment and

difficulty, is safe and right; and it is best of all to take counsel of God, who is wonderful in it, and guides his people with it; but nothing is worse than for a man to take counsel of his own heart, or only to consult himself; for such counsel often casts a man down, and he is ashamed of it sooner or later: but this seems not to be the sense here; the phrase denotes the distressing circumstances and anxiety of mind the psalmist was in; he was at his wits' end, and cast about in his mind, and had various devices and counsels formed there; and yet knew not what way to take, what course to steer;

*[having] sorrow in my heart daily*; by reason of God's hiding his face from him; on account of sin that dwelt in him, or was committed by him; because of his distance from the house of God, and the worship and ordinances of it; and by reason of his many enemies that surrounded him on every side: this sorrow was an heart sorrow, and what continually attended him day by day; or was in the daytime, when men are generally amused with business or diversions, as well as in the night, as Kimchi observes;

*how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?* even the vilest of men, (<sup>f218</sup>Psalm 12:8); this may be understood either of temporal enemies, and was true of David when he was obliged not only to leave his own house and family, but the land of Judea, and flee to the Philistines; and when he fled from Absalom his son, lest he should be taken and slain by him; or of spiritual enemies, and is true of saints when sin prevails and leads captive, and when the temptations of Satan succeed; as when he prevailed upon David to number the people, Peter to deny his master, etc. The Jewish writers <sup>f218</sup> observe that here are four "how longs", answerable to the four monarchies, Babylonian, Persian, Grecian, and Roman, and their captivities under them.

**Ver. 3.** *Consider [and] hear me, O Lord my God*, etc.] The psalmist amidst all his distresses rightly applies to God by prayer, claims his interest in him as his covenant God, which still continued notwithstanding all his darkness, desertions, and afflictions; and entreats him to "consider" his affliction and trouble, and deliver him out of it; to consider his enemies, how many and mighty they were; and his own weakness his frame, that he was but dust, and unable to stand against them: or to "look" <sup>f219</sup> upon his affliction, and upon him under it, with an eye of pity and compassion; to have respect to him and to his prayers, and to turn unto him, and lift up the light of his countenance upon him: and so this petition is opposed to the

complaint in (<sup><B101></sup>Psalm 13:1); and he further requests that he would “hear” him; that is, so as to answer him, and that immediately, and thereby show that he had not forgotten him, but was mindful of him, of his love to him, and covenant with him;

*lighten mine eyes*: meaning either the eyes of his body, which might be dim and dull through a failure of the animal spirits, by reason of inward grief, outward afflictions, or for want of bodily food; which when obtained refreshes nature, cheers the animal spirits, enlightens or gives a briskness to the eyes; (see <sup><D127></sup>1 Samuel 14:27,29); or else the eyes of his understanding, (<sup><B018></sup>Ephesians 1:18); that he might behold wondrous things in the law of God, know the things which were freely given to him of God, see more clearly his interest in him, and in the covenant of his grace, and have his soul refreshed and comforted with the light of God’s countenance; and he be better able to discern his enemies, and guard against them; and be directed to take the best method to be delivered and secured from them. The people of God are sometimes in the dark, and see no light; especially when benighted, and in sleepy frames; and it is God’s work to enlighten and quicken them;

*lest I sleep [the sleep] of death*; a natural death <sup>f220</sup>, which is comparable to sleep, and often expressed by it; and which sense agrees with lightening the eyes of his body, as before explained; or rather the sense is, lift up the light of thy countenance, revive thy work in the midst of the years; let me see thy goodness in the land of the living, that I may not faint and sink and die away. Or it may be an eternal death is designed; for though true believers shall never die this death, yet they may be in such circumstances, as through unbelief to fear they shall. The Targum paraphrases the word thus;

“enlighten mine eyes in thy law, lest I sin, and sleep with those who are guilty of death.”

**Ver. 4.** *Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him*, etc.] Which is an argument God takes notice of; and for which reason he does not give up his people into the hands of their enemies; (see <sup><F227></sup>Deuteronomy 32:27). The Chaldee paraphrase interprets this of the evil imagination or corruption of nature, and represents it as a person, as the Apostle Paul does in (<sup><B175></sup>Romans 7:15-21); and which may be said to prevail, when it pushes on to sin, and hinders doing good, and carries captive; and it may be applied to Satan, the great enemy of God’s people, who triumphs over them, when he succeeds in his temptations;

*[and] those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved;* meaning from his house and family, from his country and kingdom, from a prosperous state and condition to a distressed one; at which the troublers of David's peace would rejoice. They that trouble the saints are sin, Satan, and the world; and the two last rejoice when they are in an uncomfortable and afflicted condition; and especially Satan rejoices when he gains his point, if it is but to move them from any degree of steadfastness, of faith and hope, or from the ways of God in any respect: the Targum adds, "from thy ways"; for to be moved so as to perish eternally they cannot, being built upon the Rock of ages, and surrounded by the power and grace of God.

**Ver. 5.** *But I have trusted in thy mercy,* etc.] The faith, hope, and comfort of the psalmist grew and increased by prayer; from complaining he goes to praying, from praying to believing; he trusted not in himself, not in his own heart, nor in his own righteousness and merits, but in the mercy of God; and not in the bare absolute mercy of God, but in the grace and goodness of God, as the word <sup>f221</sup> here used signifies, as it is displayed in the plenteous redemption which is by Christ; which is a sufficient ground of faith and hope; (see ~~4300~~ Psalm 130:7);

*my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation;* which God is the contriver, author, and giver of, and in which the glory of his perfections is so greatly displayed: and a true believer rejoices more on account that God is glorified by it than because of his own interest in it; and this joy is an inward one, it is joy in the heart, and is real and unfeigned, and is what continues, and will be felt and expressed both here and hereafter.

**Ver. 6.** *I will sing unto the Lord,* etc.] In prayer faith is encouraged, through believing the heart is filled with joy; and this joy is expressed by the lips, in songs of praise to the Lord, ascribing the glory of salvation to him, and giving him thanks for every mercy and blessing of life;

*because he hath dealt bountifully with me;* both in a way of providence and grace, granting life and preserving it, and supporting with the comforts of it; blessing with spiritual blessings, and crowning with loving kindness and tender mercies; all which is generous and bountiful dealing, and affords a just occasion of praise and thanksgiving; (see ~~4300~~ Psalm 116:7 103:1-5).