

Psalm 13

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Date: 05 July 2015

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[0:00] If you have a copy of the Scriptures, I want you to open up to the book of Psalms, Psalm 13.

! If you don't have a copy of the Scriptures with you, you're welcome to use one of the black hardback Bibles in the chairs. If you don't have a Bible at all, you can take one of those home with you. That's fine. You can have one of those. And if you're using one of those Bibles, you just need to turn to page 453.

Otherwise, the book of Psalms will be roughly in the middle of your Bible. If you open up to Job in the middle, move forward a bit. If you open up in Proverbs, move back a bit. But you'll find the book of Psalms, and we are in Psalm 13 this morning.

We've been in the Psalms for this summer, and we'll continue in the Psalms for the rest of this month before we get back to Romans in chapter 8 of Romans in August. So Psalm 13 this morning, I want you guys to stand as we read God's Word together.

To the choir master, Psalm of David. How long, O Lord, will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?

[1:10] How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me? Consider and answer me, O Lord my God.

Lift up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death. Lest my enemies say I have prevailed over him. Lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken. But I have trusted in your steadfast love.

My heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord because he has dealt bountifully with me. Father, we're grateful that your spirit inspired David to write this psalm.

Opening up for us not only his heart and his feelings, but also opening up to us the way and showing us the way to respond when we experience similar things.

And so help us this morning to come to a right understanding of your Word and help us to respond rightly to it. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. You guys take a seat.

[2:18] I'm not sure how many of you are fans of the television show Seinfeld. I used to watch it several years ago. I used to watch it pretty regularly.

I don't really watch it anymore. I don't even know what time it comes on. But if ever there was a show that you could say really embraced grayness in the area of morality, I would say it was Seinfeld.

In fact, it bills itself as the show that was about nothing, that takes a stance on nothing, that doesn't take a stance for anything good, doesn't take a stance for anything bad, so that by the time you get to the final episode of the show, none of the characters are really all that morally praiseworthy.

None of them are really worth saying, I'd like to be like that person. But none of them are so awful that you dislike them, so that when they get to the last episode, the most fitting thing that can happen is for them to have to go to jail, not because they've done some horrible thing, but because they've just not done anything good at all.

They've just ignored people who needed them, ignored people who needed help, and yet didn't actually do anything directly to anyone. That encapsulated the whole show. It was just a kind of a morally gray show in which the main characters aren't good, they're not bad, they just don't do anything that's worth emulating or hating.

[3:34] The only time I noticed in that show where you had a clear reference to good and evil was with Jerry's nemesis, Newman. In fact, he couldn't even say the name Newman without saying it like Newman was some sort of evil arch-villain in his life.

And I look at that show and I think, why is it the only time that there's clear good and evil is when Jerry has a supposed nemesis, an enemy that he has set up for himself.

And then I look in our own lives and I think, do we have anybody like that? Do you have anybody in your life that in your mind at least, I mean, they are the enemy, they are your nemesis.

I don't know that I've ever had anybody that I've really viewed in that way. I mean, I've had people that I didn't really care for all that much. There's certainly been plenty of people who didn't really care for me. Maybe they thought I was their nemesis.

But I don't know that I've really had someone that I would say, that's my enemy, that's enemy number one. They're really my nemesis. But we do experience in our lives, we do experience those who oppose us.

[4 : 38] Those whom David calls in this psalm his foes. In fact, David makes a distinction in Psalm 13 between his enemy in the singular and then his foes who sort of tend to surround him and hope for bad things.

So that he has an enemy in the psalm who's actively trying to harm him and David has foes in the psalm who are ready to rejoice when the enemy actually harms David.

Take a look, I'll show you. Right in the middle of the psalm, you see this reference to David's enemy. At the end of verse 2, we read, How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

And then again in verse 4, Lest my enemy say I have prevailed over him. So David has an enemy that seeks to prevail over him, that seeks to do him harm.

And then at the end of verse 4, he has foes. Lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken. So David knows that there is someone, he doesn't name this someone, we don't know in David's life who this person was.

[5 : 41] He has someone that he considers an enemy, someone who's trying to do harm to him.

And then he has lots of other people that enter into his life that surround him that he calls foes who really just would like to rejoice when the enemy finally triumphs over David.

We can't really directly identify the enemy here. It might be Saul. This could be in that period of David's life where he's running from King Saul because Saul has been rejected by God as king and Samuel the prophet in his place has anointed David as the next king and yet Saul is still reigning as king and so Saul frequently sought to kill David and to take David off the scene so he wouldn't have a problem with him anymore.

So it could be Saul or it could be any one of David's enemies, foreign kings that he had to deal with when he himself was king. We don't know who the enemy is. I noticed this week as I was studying though that a lot of commentators believe that the enemy may actually be death itself.

Take a look. You can see why some would say that. Verse 2, How long shall my enemy be exalted over me? And then verse 3, Consider and answer me, O Lord my God. Light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death.

So there's a reference to death. Help me God, lest I die. And then, lest my enemy say I have prevailed over him. So some people think that these two phrases, him sleeping the sleep of death and his enemy prevailing are more or less two ways of saying the same thing.

[7 : 07] So that David's ultimate enemy here might in fact be death itself. I'm not convinced that that's necessarily the case. But I'm also not convinced that for us, we would even want to make too much of a distinction between our ultimate enemy and death itself.

Because when you turn to the New Testament, yes, we find that we have persecutors. Yes, we find that we might have those that we might label as foes. But Jesus says to love your enemies.

Pray for those who persecute you. Do good to those who would seek to do you harm. And yet, aside from those foes in the plural, there is a singular enemy that's talked about throughout the New Testament.

Satan himself is held out as not only the enemy of God and the enemy of Christ, but the enemy of God's people. And you cannot really separate Satan himself from his chief work, which is to bring death to us.

Both physical death and spiritual death. So if you hold your place in the Psalms, I want to show you this. Turn over to the book of Hebrews way back in your New Testament. In Hebrews chapter 2, speaking of why Christ came, what Christ came to accomplish, reread in verse 18, or verse 17, I'm sorry, verse 18, I'm on the wrong passage here.

[8 : 30] That's why I can't get the verse. Verse 14. Hebrews chapter 2 verse 14 says, Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself, that's Jesus, likewise partook of the same things, so that through death, he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil.

So that from a New Testament perspective, our chief enemy is the devil. Christ came to destroy the work of the devil. And the devil's main task, his main tool, is to bring death into our lives.

Both physical death and spiritual death. We know, of course, that God is sovereign, that God determines when we die, and yet God uses means.

God, in fact, throughout the Old Testament, we see a number of times, and even in the New Testament, that God uses the sinful actions of human beings to accomplish His plan. Well, Satan is no different. Satan, despite all of his working against God, ultimately accomplishes God's plan, though he hates that he does that.

And even in the aspect of death, on the one hand, we can say God determines when we die, but on the other hand, we can say that Satan is actively seeking to kill us, to bring death to us.

[9 : 41] So that Peter describes Satan as being like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. So Satan is our primary enemy, and the primary means by which he tries to come against us is through death.

That's so much so the case that Paul just says that death is the ultimate enemy. 1 Corinthians 15, verse 25, Paul says that Christ must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet, and the last enemy to be destroyed is death.

And when you arrive at the end of the book of Revelation, you see both, you see Satan and all of those who are in allegiance to Him being thrown into the lake of fire, the place of ultimate death. And we read that because of that, in the new heavens and new earth, there will be no more death, no more pain, no more tears, no more crying. So I'm not entirely sure that from a New Testament perspective, we should make too strong a distinction between death as our enemy being a personal enemy as in Satan himself, or our enemy being death itself, because they are one and the same. David's enemy in Psalm 13 ultimately seeks to kill him. Our enemy seeks to kill us, seeks to destroy us, both spiritually and physically.

[11 : 06] So how do we react to that? I think that's what Psalm 13 is teaching us. I think it's teaching us how do we face an enemy that seeks to actually destroy us?

How do we respond when we feel at times as if that enemy is prevailing over us? There will be days, there will sometimes be weeks and months and perhaps even years in your life where you feel as if the enemy has the upper hand.

That you only see darkness around you. You sense and feel that death is right upon you. And Psalm 13 helps us to see how we can rightly respond to that feeling.

So that if you look at Psalm 13, it's really easy to break it down. The first two verses describe David's actual feelings. They describe for us the pain that David is in.

And then the next two verses, verses 3 and 4, show us David's prayer in response to that pain. And then finally, at the end, David responds in praise. So it moves from pain through prayer all the way down to praise.

[12 : 18] Or you might say that David moves from depression to crying out to God, finally to receiving deliverance from God. So you can take a look at the first two verses and see David expressing his genuine feelings of what the world seems like to him.

And I think at times, even if not at this moment, there will be times when you can connect to the way that David feels. So notice what he says. He uses the phrase how long over and over.

He says, first of all, how long, O Lord, will you forget me forever? So David feels forgotten by God. There are times when we will feel forgotten by God.

We will feel as if he's just forgotten about us. He's just, we don't know where he is. We don't know what he's doing. But then it gets worse. He says, how long will you hide your face from me?

It's one thing to be forgotten. It's another thing for somebody to actively turn their back on you. And David says, not only do I feel as if maybe I've been forgotten, I also feel as if God won't listen to me.

[13 : 28] He won't hear me. He doesn't care anymore. I mean, if someone, if a close friend of yours forgets your birthday, you think, well, oh, that's frustrating. They forgot my birthday. But if they say, hey, I know today's your birthday, but I just don't really care and I'm not going to get you a present.

So forget about it. You know, that stings a little bit more. That hurts a little bit more. And I think that's the movement that David is making to say, on the one hand, I feel forgotten. But then on the other hand, more than that, I feel ignored.

I feel almost abandoned by God. And that leads David to what I think the Puritans would probably call a sense of melancholy. Or in modern terms, we would probably just call it depression.

Look at David's feelings in verse 2. How long must I take counsel in my soul? Because David feels as if he can't take counsel in God. He thinks God has turned his back.

He feels as if God's ignoring him. So he's having to turn inward. How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day?

[14 : 29] This is a depressed person. This is a person who's down. This reminds me of Droopy, the dog on the old cartoons. Everything is just sort of negative and down. That's where David has arrived.

King David, the one who defeated Goliath, the one who led armies, King David feels despondent and depressed. So it's no surprise that normal people like you and I would experience the same kinds of feelings.

But it moves on from there. From forgotten to ignored to depressed. And then finally, David just says, I feel as if I've lost. I feel beaten.

I feel as if the enemy has won. How long, he says, shall my enemy be exalted over me? And so it continues to intensify. Each step, four steps here as David describes how he feels from forgotten to ignored to depression now to just defeat.

He feels defeated. That's where you end up. If you continue along this path and if things don't improve quickly in your life, eventually you can arrive to a point to where you just feel as if you've already lost the enemy, whether that be the ultimate enemy, Satan, or it be just a number of the foes that are out in the world who are waiting for you to fail, it feels as if sometimes they have the upper hand, they're winning.

[15 : 55] I'm losing. And what you do at that point when you arrive at that place is going to impact where you head in your life. It's going to determine the rest of your thought process.

It's going to determine whether or not you remain depressed and despondent or whether you arrive at a place where you can experience joy again and rejoice in God and all that He has done for you. David tells us that through his example that when we're in that moment of pain, the only answer is to cry out to God in prayer. And notice in his prayer how he counters each of those four steps along the way.

Because he begins crying out to God, he says, consider. In other words, don't forget me. Look in my direction. Think about me is what he's saying.

Think. Notice me. I'm right here. He doesn't want to feel forgotten anymore. And then he cries out, answer me, oh Lord my God. Don't ignore me.

[16 : 54] I'm crying out. Answer me. My kids say that to me a lot. Because, honestly, kids are always asking you for something. They're always. I hear the word dad approximately 2,337,242 times a day.

I think that's how many times I hear the word dad. Dad. Dad. Dad. Dad. Hey dad. Can you look? Hey dad. Over here. Hey dad. Check this out. Hey dad. And then eventually it becomes dad. You know. And I know my mind is somewhere else because I'm a scatterbrained person.

If you haven't figured that out by now, then you're a slow person because I'm very scatterbrained and it's on the surface. It's obvious. Don't expect me to remember something you tell me now.

You're going to have to text me later on or something along those lines.

I know that I'm that kind of person. And not only am I a scatterbrained, but I'm easily distracted and focused on other things. And so I get it. I know why my kids have to say dad so many times because they feel like I'm not even listening.

Well, because sometimes, honestly, I'm not listening. All right. And I get that. And so sometimes they'll say, Dad, answer me. Dad, can you hear me? And that's what David is saying here. Lord, don't just notice me.

[18 : 00] Answer me. I'm crying out to you. I feel as if you're not listening, as if you've turned your back and you're ignoring me and you're hiding your face from me. Don't hide your face. Turn your face this way.

Answer me. Sometimes Piper, when I'm holding her, she'll just grab my cheeks and point me straight at her face. And then she just babbles and says really nothing that means anything. But she wants to make sure that I'm looking right at her.

And that's the imagery here. God seems to be hiding his face. David wants to, in a sense, grab God's face and say, answer me. Listen, I'm asking you for something. And it's okay to genuinely cry out to God like that.

It's okay to genuinely cry out, God, I feel abandoned. Even Jesus himself on the cross cries out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? It's perfectly legitimate and normal to say, please hear me and answer me and turn your face back towards me so that I can know that you're listening. And that's exactly what David does. If you feel forgotten, cry out. If you feel ignored, cry out to be heard. Because God hears the prayers of His people.

[19 : 09] And then He moves on to counter the depression that He feels. Light up my eyes, He says, lest I sleep the sleep of death.

give light to my eyes once again. Give me a reason to see. Give me something to hope in. Give me something to look toward. Light up my eyes. Don't let me sit in darkness any longer.

But help me. Restore me. Reinvigorate me. Lest my enemies say, I have prevailed over him. Lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken.

Hear me, God. Turn to me. Listen to me. Restore to me joy. And light up my eyes. Because I don't want the enemy to prevail.

Don't let the enemy prevail. Lest he should win. If you don't hear me, if you don't answer me, the enemy will win. My foes will rejoice in my falling.

[20 : 07] Hear and listen. That's a legitimate prayer for us to pray. Even when we're dealing with spiritual issues and we have in view our ultimate enemy, it's perfectly legitimate to say, God, do not let Satan prevail here.

Don't let him prevail. Listen. Light up my eyes. Hear me. Do something. Stir me. Do something within me and around me so that the enemy can no longer rejoice.

So that the enemy will not win. He will not prevail. When you're in pain, you pray. And because God is the kind of God that he is, God is a God who answers.

So that ultimately by the time that David arrives at the end of this song, David is in full-blown praise to God. I mean, he moves from this deep depression to rejoicing in the deliverance that God has provided by the end of the praise, by the end of the psalm.

And I want to know how to do that. I want to know how can I move in those times of despondency? How can I get to a place where I'm now finally rejoicing once again in the Lord? How can this happen?

[21 : 19] How can I overcome the temptation of the enemy to abandon the faith and just remain in a dark place? Verse 5. David says, I have trusted in your steadfast love.

Now I want you to notice two key things in just that short statement right there. First of all, David recognizes that the ground of his hope, the reason that he'll be able to praise God, the reason that he can, in fact, trust that God is going to answer him is because God is a God of steadfast love. Now this is a word in Hebrew that is actually somewhat difficult to translate into English. And so if you guys are reading anything other than the English Standard Version that I preach from, you probably have a different kind of translation.

You might have something like loving kindness. You might have something like just simply kindness or just love. You might have some translations might even go as far as to say something along the lines of covenant love.

It's a word that we can't really sum up easily in English. The root meaning of it is simply kindness. So that you see one person displaying kindness to another throughout the Old Testament and this word is used a handful of times to refer to human relationships.

[22 : 38] This person does this for this nice person or sometimes in the law you are commanded to show kindness to another person and that means doing basic things for people. It means helping someone out when you see them and they need help.

That's showing them kindness. But it's used most of the time in the Old Testament to describe God's motive for His actions toward His own people. Which is why some people prefer the translation covenant love.

because this is a specific kind of kindness when used in reference to God that He only displays toward His covenant people. You will not find in the Old Testament an instance where God displays this sort of thing towards those who are outside of the covenant.

God chooses to display this kind of love or this kind of kindness toward those that He has chosen to make His own. It is His covenant love.

It is an unending, it is a steadfast enduring kindness that God in His freedom has decided to give toward those who belong to Him.

[23 : 46] That's the grounds of David's hope. David's grounds are not God, I know that you will hear me because I deserve to be heard. David's hope is not I deserve to win over the enemy.

That's not David's hope. David's hope is not grounded in anything that he's done. David does not say, I will trust in you because you will reward me for all the good things that I've done in your name.

That's not what David says. I trust in you because of your steadfast covenant unending determination to show kindness toward your people.

And I am one of your people. And then secondly there's the idea of David trusting in that. It is not merely that God's covenant love exists, that his kindness exists, but David displays heartfelt trust and dependency in God's love.

Again, not depending upon his own abilities, not depending upon anything that he has done, but trusting in God's love and mercy. That translates into the New Testament as something like this.

[24 : 53] We know that no one is justified before God by the works of the law. Because our standing with God is never based upon anything that we do. It's based upon our faith in what he has done for us preeminently in Christ.

God has done all that is necessary to redeem us, to save us, and to sanctify us, and make us holy, and to deliver us from the enemy. And we need to trust in his work and not our own.

And that's what David expresses. David responds, he has cried out to God for help, and now he knows that God will help him because of the kind of God that God is, and that David belongs to God's covenant people, and so David says, I have trusted in your love.

And then finally we arrive at rejoicing. My heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord because he has dealt bountifully with me.

He's dealt bountifully. God has done things that are overflowing towards David. And we might think, well sure David says that, I mean after all, God did choose him when he was just a shepherd boy, anoint him as king, bless his kingdom and his reign, even forgave David when he committed terrible sins.

[26 : 17] Of course, David would say that God has dealt bountifully with him. We could say the same thing about ourselves. Paul says in Romans chapter 5 that it was while we were enemies of God that Christ died for us.

We deserve God's wrath and yet God in the love that he has chosen to display before us has come to us who were his enemy and in love he has put his son to death so that we might experience salvation and the joy that flows from being among those who have been delivered by him.

He has dealt bountifully with all those who belong to him. None of us deserves his mercy. By definition, mercy and grace cannot be deserved.

And so all of us who know Christ and have been delivered and rescued by him ought to be able to join with David and say the Lord has dealt bountifully. He has given me overwhelming overflowing grace.

He has demonstrated great kindness toward me in Christ. And when you begin to meditate on that, when you begin to spend time thinking about what Christ has done for you, even in the midst of the most despondent times, you will find reasons for rejoicing.

[27 : 45] It might be rejoicing in the midst of tears. There's no indication here that all of David's problems suddenly disappear. So that it might be a rejoicing in the midst of tears and pain that still lingers or pain that still returns periodically.

But if you will spend time meditating upon all that God has done for you in Christ, how bountifully he has dealt with you, how dependable his steadfast love is, you will find reasons to rejoice even in the midst of difficult and dark days.

We do have a real enemy. We do have an enemy that does seek to destroy us. We do have an enemy that would love to bring death into our lives.

In fact, Paul says in Ephesians chapter 6, he reminds us that our enemy is not the people that we see around us. We may have foes in the world, but that's not our enemy.

He says that we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

[28 : 52] We have an enemy too powerful for us. We have an enemy that will win every time if we square off against him on our own. But we have a God of steadfast love, a God who deals

bountifully with us, a God who has stepped in our place and defeated the enemy for us and taken away from him his greatest power, that is the power of death.

And we ought to rejoice in that. We ought to depend upon that and respond in joy. And if you cannot do that, it may be that you have not yet experienced his steadfast love and kindness.

It may be that you have not yet really trusted in him. So that your greatest need this morning is to trust in him and be and experience the initial deliverance from death that you need.

Do not face off against the enemy on your own. Do not think that you can overcome him. Do not think that you can make it through this life on your own. Trust in him who deals bountifully with all those who belong to him.

And you will belong to him. And the blood of Christ will wash away your sins. Let's pray.