

PSALM 13

This psalm is the deserted soul's case and cure. Whether it was penned upon any particular occasion does not appear, but in general,

- I. David sadly complains that God had long withdrawn from him and delayed to relieve him (v. 1, 2).
- II. He earnestly prays to God to consider his case and comfort him (v. 3, 4).
- III. He assures himself of an answer of peace, and therefore concludes the psalm with joy and triumph, because he concludes his deliverance to be as good as wrought (v. 5, 6).

PSALM 13:1-6

DAVID'S COMPLAINTS TURNED INTO PRAISES

To the chief musician. A psalm of David.

David, in affliction, is here pouring out his soul before God; his address is short, but the method is very observable, and of use for direction and encouragement.

I. His troubles extort complaints (v. 1, 2); and the afflicted have liberty to *pour out their complaint before the Lord*, Psalm 102 title. It is some ease to a troubled spirit to give vent to its griefs, especially to give vent to them at the throne of grace, where we are sure to find one who is afflicted in the afflictions of his people and is troubled with the feeling of their infirmities; thither we have boldness of access by faith, and there we have *parresia* — *freedom of speech*. Observe here,

1. What David complains of.

(1.) God's unkindness; so he construed it, and it was his infirmity. He thought God had forgotten him, had forgotten his promises to him, his covenant with him, his former lovingkindness which he had shown him and which he took to be an earnest of further mercy, had forgotten that

there was such a man in the world, who needed and expected relief and succour from him. Thus Zion said, *My God has forgotten me* (²³⁹⁴Isaiah 49:14), Israel said, *My way is hidden from the Lord*, ²⁴⁰²Isaiah 40:27. Not that any good man can doubt the omniscience, goodness, and faithfulness of God; but it is a peevish expression of prevailing fear, which yet, when it arises from a high esteem and earnest desire of God's favour, though it be indecent and culpable, shall be passed by and pardoned, for the second thought will retract it and repent of it. God hid his face from him, so that he wanted that inward comfort in God which he used to have, and herein was a type of Christ upon the cross, crying out, *My God, why hast thou forsaken me?* God sometimes hides his face from his own children, and leaves them in the dark concerning their interest in him; and this they lay to heart more than any outward trouble whatsoever.

(2.) His own uneasiness.

[1.] He was racked with care, which filled his head: *I take counsel in my soul*; “I am at a loss, and am *inops consilii* — *without a friend to advise with* that I can put any confidence in, and therefore am myself continually projecting what to do to help myself; but none of my projects are likely to take effect, so that I am at my wits' end, and in a continual agitation.” Anxious cares are heavy burdens with which good people often load themselves more than they need.

[2.] He was overwhelmed with sorrow, which filled his heart: *I have sorrow in my heart daily*. He had a constant disposition to sorrow and it preyed upon his spirits, not only in the night, when he was silent and solitary, but by day too, when lighter griefs are diverted and dissipated by conversation and business; nay, every day brought with it fresh occasions of grief; *the clouds returned after the rain*. The bread of sorrow is sometimes the saint's daily bread. Our Master himself was a man of sorrows.

(3.) His enemies' insolence, which added to his grief. Saul his great enemy, and others under him, were exalted over him, triumphed in his distress, pleased themselves with his grief, and promised themselves a complete victory over him. This he complained of as reflecting dishonour upon God, and his power and promise.

2. How he expostulates with God hereupon: “*How long shall it be thus?*” And, “*Shall it be thus for ever?*” Long afflictions try our patience and

often tire it. It is a common temptation, when trouble lasts long, to think it will last always; despondency then turns into despair, and those that have long been without joy begin, at last, to be without hope. “Lord, tell me how long thou wilt hide thy face, and assure me that it shall not be for ever, but that thou wilt return at length in mercy to me, and then I shall the more easily bear my present troubles.”

II. His complaints stir up his prayers, v. 3, 4. We should never allow ourselves to make any complaints but what are fit to be offered up to God and what drive us to our knees. Observe here,

1. What his petitions are: *Consider my case, hear my complaints, and enlighten my eyes*, that is,

(1.) “Strengthen my faith;” for faith is the eye of the soul, with which it sees above, and sees through, the things of sense. “Lord, enable me to look beyond my present troubles and to foresee a happy issue of them.”

(2.) “Guide my way; enable me to look about me, that I may avoid the snares which are laid for me.”

(3.) “Refresh my soul with the joy of thy salvation.” That which revives the drooping spirits is said to *enlighten the eyes*, ⁴⁹⁴²1 Samuel 14:27; ⁴⁹⁰⁸Ezra 9:8. “Lord, scatter the cloud of melancholy which darkens my eyes, and let my countenance be made pleasant.”

2. What his pleas are. He mentions his relation to God and interest in him (*O Lord my God!*) and insists upon the greatness of the peril, which called for speedy relief and succour. If his eyes were not enlightened quickly,

(1.) He concludes that he must perish: “I shall *sleep the sleep of death*; I cannot live under the weight of all this care and grief.” Nothing is more killing to a soul than the want of God's favour, nothing more reviving than the return of it.

(2.) That then his enemies would triumph: “*Lest my enemy say*, So would I have it; lest Saul, lest Satan, be gratified in my fall.” It would gratify the pride of his enemy: He will say, “*I have prevailed*, I have gotten the day, and been too hard for him and his God.” It would gratify the malice of his enemies: They will *rejoice when I am moved*. And will it be for God's honour to suffer them thus to trample upon all that is sacred both in heaven and earth?

III. His prayers are soon turned into praises (v. 5, 6): *But my heart shall rejoice and I will sing to the Lord.* What a surprising change is here in a few lines! In the beginning of the psalm we have him drooping, trembling, and ready to sink into melancholy and despair; but, in the close of it, rejoicing in God, and elevated and enlarged in his praises. See the power of faith, the power of prayer, and how good it is to draw near to God. If we bring our cares and griefs to the throne of grace, and leave them there, we may go away like Hannah, and our *countenance will be no more sad,* ^{<0118>}1 Samuel 1:18. And here observe the method of his comfort.

1. God's mercy is the support of his faith. "My case is bad enough, and I am ready to think it deplorable, till I consider the infinite goodness of God; but, finding I have that to trust to, I am comforted, though I have no merit of my own. In former distresses *I have trusted in the mercy of God,* and I never found that it failed me; his mercy has in due time relieved me and my confidence in it has in the mean time supported me. Even in the depth of this distress, when God hid his face from me, when without were fightings and within were fears, yet *I trusted in the mercy of God* and that was as an anchor in a storm, by the help of which, though I was tossed, I was not overset." And still *I do trust in thy mercy;* so some read it. "I refer myself to that, with an assurance that it will do well for me at last." This he pleads with God, knowing what pleasure he takes *in those that hope in his mercy,* ^{<1471>}Psalm 147:11.

2. His faith in God's mercy filled his heart with *joy in his salvation;* for joy and peace come *by believing,* ^{<1513>}Romans 15:13. *Believing, you rejoice,* ^{<0108>}1 Peter 1:8. Having put his trust in the mercy of God, he is fully assured of salvation, and that his heart, which was now daily grieving, should *rejoice in that salvation.* Though weeping endure long, joy will return.

3. His joy in God's salvation would fill his mouth with songs of praise (v. 6): "*I will sing unto the Lord,* sing in remembrance of what he has done formerly; though I should never recover the peace I have had, I will die blessing God that ever I had it. He has dealt bountifully with me formerly, and he shall have the glory of that, however he is pleased to deal with me now. I will sing in hope of what he will do for me at last, being confident that all will end well, will end everlastingly well." But he speaks of it as a thing past (*He has dealt bountifully with me*), because by faith he had received the earnest of the salvation and he was as confident of it as if it had been done already.

In singing this psalm and praying it over, if we have not the same complaints to make that David had, we must thank God that we have not, dread and deprecate his withdrawings, sympathize with those that are troubled in mind, and encourage ourselves in our most holy faith and joy.