
INTRODUCTION

“How long will this go on? How long do I have to wait? How long will this last? How long? How long? How long?”

“How long?” is a question that we all ask, isn’t it? How long will my child rebel? How long will their bullying last? How long will evil go unpunished? How long will this pain go on? How long will the chemo be? How long will my depression continue? How long do I have to wait for a wife/husband/friend? How long will this temptation endure? How long with this test be? How long until he forgives me? How long must I wait for assurance? How long until God takes me to heaven?

What’s God’s answer to our “how long” questions? In Psalm 13, God gives us three short answers to our “how long” questions.

BACKGROUND

The Psalms are God's infallible study of the connections between feeling, thinking, and doing. They stimulate healthy thoughts, feelings, and actions. But they also help us process dangerous and damaging emotions. So far we've felt the following Psalms:

- Psalm 1: A Happy Song
- Psalm 2: A Fight Song
- Psalm 3: A Peace Song
- Psalm 4: A Love Song
- Psalm 5: A Hate Song
- Psalm 6: A Complaining Song
- Psalm 7: A Justice Song
- Psalm 8: An Awe Song
- Psalm 9: A Safe Song
- Psalm 10: A Patient Song
- Psalm 11: A Stabilizing Song
- Psalm 12: A Healing Song



1. OUR QUESTIONS ARE LONG (1-4)

“How long, O Lord?” is a question that David often asked because he suffered many times in many ways. Look at how many ways he suffers even in this Psalm.

- **Spiritual** suffering: “How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?” (1). For the Christian, losing a sense of God's favor and presence is the worst kind of suffering
- **Mental** suffering: “How long must I take counsel in my soul?” (2a). He's ruminating on the what, how, when, and why of his situation. Round and round he goes until he's mentally exhausted trying to figure it out.
- **Emotional** suffering: “How long must I...have sorrow in my heart all the day? (2b). He's downcast and depressed. No matter what anyone says or does, he cannot raise a smile or a laugh.
- **External** suffering: “How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?” (2c). When he looks around, all he can see is his enemies triumphing over his defeat.
- **Fatal** suffering: “Consider and answer me, O Lord my God; light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death” (3). He's worried that his sufferings are going to lead to death or that his sufferings will last until his death, however far away that may be.
- **Social** suffering: “Lest my enemy say, “I have prevailed over him,” lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken” (4). It's hard to face people because of what everyone's saying about him.

David was desperately worried that his frail faith wouldn't endure the lengthy suffering he was experiencing.

CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

Why does God make us wait? Some possible answers are:

- To teach us to submit to his sovereignty. He has the right to decide every who, what, when, where and how.
- To give us something better. Holiness is better for us than comfort.
- To develop our faith. We learn how dependent we are on God for everything.
- To test our faith. How much do we really believe in God's power.
- To highlight our faith. Others see our perseverance through difficulty and are challenged to believe (more).
- To teach us to pray. It's not a shopping trip but a wrestling match.
- To train us to help others. Long waiting equips us to help others in their long waits.

Sing it to Jesus. We sing this Psalm to the God who has experienced it himself in Jesus. Jesus suffered spiritually, mentally, emotionally, externally, fatally, and socially. His enemies rejoiced at his sufferings and defeat. “How long?” was the cry of his soul. “How long will I suffer?” We sing it knowing that he knows and can sympathize. We sing it knowing that the only reason he suffered is for our sakes.

LONG SUFFERING GENERATES LONG QUESTIONING



“So what's God's answer?”
God's answers are surprisingly short and simple?



2. GOD'S ANSWERS ARE SHORT (5-6)

God provides David with three one-word answers which David articulates and expresses.

The first answer is "Trust." "**But I have trusted in your steadfast love**" (5a). David is reminded of how he has trusted in God's steady love in the past.

The second answer is "Rejoice." "**My heart shall rejoice in your salvation**" (5b). Whatever else he has lost, he still has God's salvation and that alone is reason to rejoice.

The third answer is "Worship." "**I will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with me**" (6). Whatever else is going on in the present, he can find plenty reason to praise God from the past.

CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

Accept God's short answers. When we are asking "How long?" God gives three short answers: Trust, rejoice, worship. When you've got long complex questions, hear God's short simple answers. Trust me. Rejoice in me. Worship me.

Sing it with Jesus. God the Father's answer to his suffering Son's question "How long do I have to suffer?" was "Long enough to save." Therefore Jesus in his human nature trusted, rejoiced, and worshipped even when the question mark was immeasurably high. Eventually God said, "That's long enough." And it was finished.

IF WE QUESTION GOD'S TIMING,
IT'S TIME TO START TRUSTING.



SUMMARY



THE NEXT CHAPTER

Gospel: If we trust in Jesus we will rejoice in Jesus and worship Jesus and it's Jesus alone who can give us that trust, joy, and worship each day and each step of life.

Heaven: Praise God that our "How Long?" questions will end at death as we will have nothing left to wait for and will give us perfect answers to all our questions.

Hell: Unbelievers' "How long?" questions are only beginning when they die. "How long?" is the cry of hell and it will go on forever because the suffering will be forever.

Prayer: Patient God, I confess my impatience, and request that you enable me to trust you, rejoice in you and worship you, so that I can build my patience and praise muscles.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What circumstances have produced "How long?" questions and prayers in your life?
2. What has God taught you through waiting?
3. On what occasions might Jesus have sung this Psalm?
4. How does hearing this Psalm sung by Jesus change the way you sing this Psalm?
5. What do you need more of? Trusting, worshipping, or rejoicing?
6. Who do you know that needs this Psalm and how will you disciple them with it?

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