

Psalm 13 // “How Long”

Summit it is a joy to be able to share with you all from God's word today. If you have your Bible turn with me to Psalm 13. That is where we are going to spend our time today.

If you have been to the Summit for any length of time you know that our pastor, has an infatuation with Nicolas Cage. I'll be honest...I don't get it, at all. Now, if he was dropping Will Smith references **(picture of the fresh prince of Bel-Air)** I'd be tracking with him all day. Don't front, you guys would be tracking too. If we're honest it's because Will Smith is a legend, only real fans will get that. Think about it, I can start singing The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air and about 85% of you or more could sing the entire theme song.

Story of the Fresh Prince of Bel-Air.

The dad jumps out of the plane leaving Will in the airplane by himself, he's screaming "help" at the top of his lungs as the plane falls out of the scene into a commercial break. Back in the early 90's, those were the cliff hangers that had you like "oh my gosh!" Millennials will never have to experience that because they have no idea what a commercial is.

It's super funny when you see the episode in its full context. But then when you stop laughing you're like...dang...the Christian life can be just like. It seems to be smooth, I can go in and out and do the loops and the tricks, but then things begin to mess up and the engine fails and all you know to do is

either jump ship or yell for help!

I don't know if you've realized this yet or not, but life is super unpredictable. When you got married, you knew it was going to be tough but you weren't expecting to navigate the valleys of infertility. You weren't expecting your marriage to be on the rocks or even worse, your spouse leaving you. Some of you as you have gotten older you thought you'd be married by now, but you're still waiting.

You knew death was certain in life but you weren't expecting to see your loved one's body debilitated by cancer or your baby suddenly miscarried.

You thought by now that the same sin struggle would be over and done with. You thought your love for God would be so much deeper today than it was last year but you find yourself still loving the things of this world way more than you do your heavenly Father!

This weekend marks the beginning of the sixth month for our church as we have embarked on this year of prayer and some of you have been faithful to praying and asking God to move in majors ways. There things going on personally in your life, you are seeing the injustice of this world and you are screaming at the top of your lungs "Help!" as your plane plummets because it seems as if God hasn't moved yet.

When these things happen we tend to question God and wonder what in the world is going on. "God, why do you allow

bad things to happen?" "God, why aren't you helping me defeat this sin?" "What did I do to deserve this in my life?" Every time we turn on the news, we hear about some horrible tragedy. I could start naming them, but 6 months from now, there's going to be a dozen more. I find myself asking God 'How long??' We see the same question in Psalm 13 four different times.

Have you found yourself in this spot yet where you were questioning God? How long will I be single, how long will have to deal with my spouse leaving me, how long will we have to sit through radiation? How long will I be tempted by the same sin? How long?

These questions to God aren't a bad thing, in fact, it communicates a deep human misunderstanding about the character and activity of God and their effect on human life.

As we embark on this new series called "Help!" we're going to see again and again in the next few weeks: If we offer our desperation to God in prayer, we will find him eager to listen, eager to forgive, eager to heal, eager to step in ... and help.

Specifically today as we look at Psalm 13 we will see questions in the midst of despair being asked, but after the questions, we see despair turn to trust. We see his heavy sighing turn to heavenly singing. How do we get to this point? How do we from the despair of our pain learn to trust in the midst of our pain?

Well before we answer that question, let's read Psalm 13.

Psalm 13 (ESV) — 1 How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? **2** 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? **3** Consider and answer me, O LORD my God; light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death, **4** lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed over him," lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken. **5** But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. **6** I will sing to the LORD, because he has dealt bountifully with me.

Again, we want to answer the question of how do we get from despair to trust. Before I answer that let me acknowledge that this sermon today is for all of us. At some level, if you know Jesus, His grace has allowed you to see that life is not as it should be. Not only do you see the effects of sin externally, but you should see it in yourself as well. You should always be longing and crying out to God, "How long till I get to see Jesus? How long till I get to put off this body of death? How long till I enter a world where there is no sin and death? This is for all of us today.

As we look at this psalm, there are two observations we see about pain: The first is that pain in life is a very real thing and it can last a very long time. The second thing is that pain in life will always drive us to something. Once we understand these two things, it causes us to see pain in a different light.

Pain in life is very real and it can last a very long time

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

Guys, I don't know if you can hear the pain in David's tone but my man is hurting. Will you forget me forever? I can understand a day, maybe even a week, but forever?

It doesn't simply stop there, he asks God will he hide his face from Him. If I can paint the picture for you guys, David is crying out to God and he feels as if God is playing this eternal game of hide and seek. I'm praying and I'm crying out and you are nowhere to be found.

I have a seven year old daughter named Tru and something that is super unique about my baby girl is she loves to tell you stories about her day and when she tells you about her day she tells them with *excruciating* detail. What I mean by that, somehow one of her friends whether it be Nora or Reece will make their way into the story and she has to tell you what they said or what they were wearing and when she finally gets to the point of the story and finishes usually Reece or Nora had nothing to do with the story at all but for some reason, we had to know whatever small detail she wanted to include. As she tells these stories sometimes I find myself kinda drifting off and she has to "Daddy! You listening?"

David is saying to God, Lord are you listening to me? Are you even looking at me? I'm sharing these details, I'm going through some things, but I feel like you aren't even there. In fact, I feel like you've forgotten all about me.

It doesn't end there look at the beginning of verse two he says **2 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?**

You see David has been wrestling both internally and externally. When David begins to think that God is not there he's turned to himself and realizes there isn't much there to encourage him. Why? Because he's come face to face with the wickedness and trouble in his own heart. If God's word says that the heart is wicked, who can trust, why would I turn to myself? That's what David realizes.

We've been there right? When we are going through troubles or loss or you name it, we look for peace. We try to forget or ignore what's going on, but pain and suffering bring with it a photographic memory. All it takes is a word or specific place to trigger your emotions and you find yourself in the place that you "thought" you forgot or you moved on from.

And pain has a center of gravity, too! A new instance of pain suddenly calls up all these past hurts, whether they are related or not. We try to numb the pain through specific pleasures only to realize that they never really satisfy us. We go to sleep, only to come face to face with dreams or nightmares that wake us right back into the reality we want to escape. We try to bring ourselves counsel and comfort only to realize our hearts are heavy with sorrow.

How long, David asks, does he have to keep on doing this? We

see this internal struggle, but then we see when he looks outward, he's faced with issues as well. His enemies.

Let's remember that David was a king and so we can assume he had mad haters. It didn't matter how many times he would say "Dont @ me", the haters just kept hating. But what's interesting about this psalm is "enemy" could be those haters coming for his throne, or it could be death, it could be the evil in this world. We don't know specifically.

What we do know is he has had consistent issues and in the midst of this, he's tired, he's ready for a new chapter, and he's ready for God to show Himself to be God in his life. He is wrecked in some of the most intimate areas of his heart and mind by an apparent feeling of God's lack of concern, by some adversary, and by his very own feelings.

Summit Family, have you been there? Maybe you're there right now. You are in a season of hurt and in that you are asking God "How long, God?" and you are met with silence and more questions.

This feeling of pain and abandonment is very real. I have a hard time sometimes when we as Christians try to make it seem like after we know Jesus everything is going to magically be alright. While we exist in this world that's not true. In this world we will have pain, we will have heartache, we will see our loved ones die, we will struggle with our indwelling sin, we will be betrayed, we will see war, we will walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we will, until the day we see Jesus face to face, see the effects of sin.

This shouldn't surprise us though. Why? Because Jesus told us himself in John 16 "You will have trouble". Super encouraging right? But He doesn't finish it there, he says..."take heart, because I have overcome the world."

The world filled with sin, pain, and heartache and Jesus came to overcome it!

This feeling of pain and abandonment is very real and it could last a very long time, but that doesn't mean that Jesus isn't aware of it. He knows about it. When we hurt, he hurts. When we cry, he cries. As I was preparing this sermon I came across John 11:35. It's the shortest verse in the Bible...Jesus wept. My brother Curtis will preach on this passage in a few weeks and I hope I'm not stealing his thunder, but that verse is so odd if you think about it. It's the story of Lazarus and Lazarus dies but Jesus raises him from the dead. In between the death and Jesus raising him up from death, he cries. Why in the world would he cry knowing good and well what He's about to do? I think the answer to the question is this: Just because Jesus already knows the outcome of your situation, it doesn't mean he isn't hurting with you in the pain in your life right now.

Listen to me, you may be crying out to God, and He may seem silent, but that does not mean that He does not care. He does care, and He wants you to keep calling out to Him. Pastor JD a few months ago spoke about the parable of the neighbor who kept knocking and knocking and knocking until what, he got his answer, he got his bread.

God is not offended when we bring our honest questions or even our heated complaints with Him. These actually confirm our desire for a solid relationship and our faith that all is not as it should be. This should push us to dig our heels in and continue to bombard the throne of grace with our requests.

Which leads me to my second observation,

Pain in Life Will Always Drive Us to Something.

3 Consider and answer me, O LORD my God; light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death, 4 lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed over him," lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken.

When you are in the midst of pain where do you go? I mentioned this earlier but often we allow our pain to push us to "pleasures" that will "numb" the pain. We enjoy the gifts instead of the gift giver. We find counsel in our friends or Netflix instead of diving head first into it and allow it to push us to the only one who has answers.

David shows us that in the midst of his pain the something that He is driven to, is God. And he does it with prayer. To press into Him means that we must vocalize our experience openly and honestly about our pain and brokenness, and abandonment and ask Him to do something about it, specifically.

What would it look like for us to pray this way to God? Let's

look at how David does it.

David begs God to look, answer, and light up my eyes. He then follows it up with if you don't do these things, I may very well die. One commentary says that in this moment here, this prayer of desperation, that if God doesn't move, David is expressing his fear that he might waver in his faith and lose confidence in God altogether. That is huge! So for that reason God, it is vital that you move.

Now, I don't know if you caught it or not but these are all imperative requests. He is pleading with God on these things. Remember David said he feels like God is hiding his face from him? This is a response to that. "How long are you going to turn away from me God? Cuz I'ma need you to look at me, not only look at me, you need to answer me, not only do I need you to answer me, you need to answer so that my inner spiritual condition can be shown in my outward appearance. So how I experience your grace can be seen by others." I need you to do this God!

You're like "can I pray like that?" I have a hard time thinking why we shouldn't. This isn't disrespectful, this is what being in a relationship looks like. Hard conversations. My wife hates them with me all the time. "Bro, Ima need you to pick up your shoes because, when you don't I trip over them at night! For the sake of my ankles, please move them!" "Ima need you to make dinner tonight because I'm tired and these kids got me like 'woah'." Yeah baby, let me serve you. "Derrick when you get home, I'ma need you to not be on your phone and be

present with us.” Why does she ask these things of me? For the sake of her physical and mental health. Because she loves me and she trusts in how I should respond, she tells me what's going on.

Here's the thing, she has a choice to not tell me how she's feeling and us risk having an unhealthy family dynamic. Or she's real with me for the sake of our marriage and the influence I have as being a present father to my kids.

God created the heavens and the earth how small do you think He is if He can't handle your open and honest thoughts?

You know who showed us how to do that? Jesus. In the garden right before His death on the cross, Jesus was open and honest telling God, I don't want to do this. There's got to be another way. I'm pressing in looking for an answer. In the end, He wanted God's will to be done. On the cross, Jesus cried out to God in His pain, in His suffering and yelled “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?!” Real, raw emotions as He pressed in.

What does this look like for us to press in? It means we...

Keep a regular habit of prayer

Even in the midst of His trial, David still somehow fights to pray and cry out to God. If we are honest, that really isn't our first response. We complain, we get angry, we retreat. What would it look like for us to, especially in the year of prayer, instead of complaining aimlessly, we at least complain to God. Right? What would it look for us, that when we are angry, we

honestly express our frustrations to God. What about when you are in turmoil do you rest in God or retreat from God? As Pastor JD has said, the secret to a consistent prayer life isn't discipline; its desperation. That is what we see in David here and what it should be for us.

Keeping a regular habit of prayer is one of the reasons why every first Tuesday of the month, in our year of prayer, we pray and fast as a church. We are seeking to develop a regular habit of crying out to God to see some specific changes happen in our circumstances.

We are going to come up on things in our lives that require intentional, focused conversation with God. **These are easier** when we are in a consistent relationship and having regular conversations. I open up easier with my wife and my friends that just some random guy on the street. I think most of you would agree with me on that. If I don't have a regular time with God my times of crying out seem awkward and more of a panic than anything else.

You need to find out the best way to make this happen for yourself. For me, it's journaling either in a notebook or my own personal notes in my phone. And it's between me and God. The day that I die and people get access to my journals they're gonna be like “dang, my man was intense!” and someone will hear that, remember this sermon and say “nah, his mess pushed him to the only hope he had.” Maybe it's not journaling for you, maybe it's poetry, or going for long walks and talking out loud like a crazy man. I've done this as well

and let me just tell that if you opt for this one, make sure you have headphones in because then you look a little less crazy, and more like you're just yelling at someone on the phone. So we press in by keeping a regular habit of prayer but also by...

Be Honest About Where You Are

David told God that if He didn't intervene, death was around the corner. That is a real emotion if I ever heard one. In 1 Peter 5:7, we are told to cast our anxieties on the Lord. What's great, right before He gives us the permission to do that, He tells us to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. If we want Him to move we have to be honest about where we are. He wants us to. He legit cares about them! He wants us to be honest with Him. What's so great about this is He already knows what's going on, so why not be honest with Him?

If I can be honest, this week as I was preparing this sermon, I realized just how much I'm personally experiencing pain. On Tuesday, a five year old girl in my daughter's school died from cancer. I've been walking with a friend of mine who has suffered from abuse. Dear friends of mine are currently walking through some of the hardest times of their lives wondering when an adoption or a child will ever happen for them. All the while, my sin and pride kept getting in the way as prepared this.

I'm not unique, I know so many of you who are doing the same thing, walking closely with those who are suffering while going through your own mess! Listen, I know how that wears you out and wears you down. I see it in you. And I know the

questions that raises in your heart. They're the same questions I have. 'God, this is not the way it's supposed to be. I'm tired of it. This stinks! How long?!'"

Planes are going down around us every single day and David realized that as well. His plane was going down and in the very midst of the nosedive of pain and this feeling of abandonment, *he somehow finds himself in this position of praise.*

How? After looking at the problem of pain and how it should drive us, ultimately to God, we can answer the question laid out at the beginning. How do we get from despair in our pain to trust in the midst of our pain?

Well David lays it out for us by showing us what he did. Look at verse 5 **Psalm 13:5-6 (ESV) — 5 But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. 6 I will sing to the LORD, because he has dealt bountifully with me.** When he looks at himself and at his situation, he pauses to remember His God! When you see pain both externally and internally, when you come face to face with it in real ways, there are three things we need to fight to remember about God.

1. God's Love is Never Changing **I have trusted in your steadfast love**

When we see the word steadfast love here, in the Hebrew this word is *hesed*. This is God's covenantal love for His people. David uses this word because he is pointing back to 2 Samuel

7 where God makes the covenant with David and promises him that an offspring from his house will be a forever king on a forever throne. He specifically uses "hesed" in 2 Sam 7:15. God chooses to enter into this covenant, not based on Israel's character, not based David's character, but based entirely on His. Why?

God made a promise to faithfully commit to and and faithfully fulfill His covenant obligations. He chooses to continue to uphold this covenant even when the people on the other end of the covenant choose not to. This is steadfast love. This is what David trusted in! Which lead him to remember something else about God. And that is that...

2. God's Salvation is Sure

Because David understands the grounds of the covenant that is entirely held up by God, David knew that his salvation was completely secure. This is so interesting to comprehend but salvation encompasses so much of what He was complaining about earlier in this psalm.

David wanted to know that God was there, the thing about salvation is that it guarantees that He is always there. David wanted saving from his enemies, the thing about salvation is that it guarantees victory over enemies or any adverse circumstances. God's salvation takes care of His people's needs.

What I find so interesting about his rejoicing in God's salvation is that He is still in the midst of his mess. God still feels far, the haters are still hating, the situation hasn't changed. However,

not one second of his suffering is worthless.

At the Blue Ridge campus we have a member who has been walking through cancer. I remember when she first got it she shared with her neighbor who doesn't know Jesus about her situation. He responded by saying "see...why would God allow something like this to happen to someone as sweet as you?" She responded with "so we could be having this conversation now" and proceeded to share the gospel with him. Her hope wasn't in her circumstances, but the God who has moved and will move in spite of the circumstances.

Romans chapter 8 speaks to this. We groan, we hurt, but "in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (Romans 8:21). This freedom can only come from a God who is concerned about your good and His glory. For that reason, salvation is surely coming!

David knows that God's salvation is a sure thing. How does he know that? Because he has seen the goodness of the Lord already in his life. Which leads me to the last thing we need to remember about God.

3. God's Goodness Knows No Limits

Depending on what version of the Bible you have verse six will either say I will sing "because He has dealt bountifully with me" or "because he is good to me." This term *gamal* (gaw-mal) essentially means here that God has rewarded or compensated to David something that he didn't deserve in the

first place. John Calvin says it this way “the word...signifies nothing else here than to bestow a benefit from pure grace.”

David realized that anything he goes through is simply par for the course. This is expected in a fallen world. Pain, heartache, brokenness, sin...all of it. However, even with that, the grace that is given to him in the midst of it is something he doesn't deserve at all. God's goodness in His life knows no limits. So it is with us. God deals bountifully with us as well! You're probably thinking we see glimpses of His goodness, but bountifully?

It is easy for us to see the pain outside, that we often forget about what's going on inside. Much of the pain that we see is because of sin. My sin, your sin, their sin. We live in a sinful world. We will experience pain. We will experience trouble. We will see brokenness. But in that, God has dealt bountifully with us!

How do I know this? Outside of the fact that you are even alive to see another day, you have been given the opportunity to hear the greatest truth in your life, the truth of Jesus! You see, unless we place our faith in Jesus, we will see something far worse than this life has to offer. That is the pain of ultimate separation from a holy God.

It is here that we need to remember for ourselves that God's goodness is on display because of Jesus:

- Jesus was sent into this world and he was forsaken by God. He took the full wrath of God for my sin and your

sin and when we believe that, we will never have to be forsaken because of our sin.

- Jesus came into this world and had God turn away from Him. When we place our faith in Jesus, that won't ever have to happen to us.
- Jesus was sent into this world and his His enemies seemingly prevailed, but He rose to be victorious so that we could be victorious as well.
- Jesus slept the sleep of death. He died in our place, so that we can be counted dead to sin. He didn't stay dead though, you see the Father raised Him by the Spirit, so that we could be raised to new life in our mortal bodies.

Hear me say this, placing our faith in Jesus may not change our current circumstances. Your plane's engines may never in this life roar back to life, but because of our faith, it allows us to see that the ultimate pain we could every experience is the full wrath of God. Jesus is our hope that this pain that we experience on earth is the closest thing to hell we will ever see and in light of eternity, it's just for a moment.

I think of the late great civil rights activist, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in his speech in Montgomery, Alabama in 1965. When asking the question of “How long?” in the face of racial injustice, he says,

“How long? Not long, because no lie can live forever.
How long? Not long, because you still reap what you sow.
How long? Not long. Because the arm of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice. How long? Not long, 'cause

mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord, trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored. He has loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible swift sword. His truth is marching on.”

If His truth is still marching on, as you ask the question of “how long?” let me tell you today, how long. Not long at all, because the same God who started a work in you has promised he will finish it.

How long? Not long at all, because I consider these present sufferings not even worth comparing to the weight of glory that will be revealed in us.

How long? Not long at all, because justice WILL roll down like the waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

How long? Not long at all, because even though we run from him, he runs after us with a never-stopping, never-giving-up, unbreaking, always, and forever love.

How long? Not long at all, because even though I see death reign on this earth today, I know that my Redeemer lives, and he WILL stand upon this earth forever.

How long? How long, my brothers and sisters? Look to Christ and you have your answer. Look to him, suffering on the cross for you; look to him, going into the grave for you; look to him, trampling on the serpent's head for you; look to him, rising from the dead for you ... and you will hear the answer: How

long? NOT LONG AT ALL!

David determined to believe this in his life, even in the midst of his mess. Let us commit to do the same. How? I think it starts with confessing where we are. Don't ignore the pain, it's there, it may not go away. But when we are honest about where we are, our only response should be to cry out to God for help! That's what I want for us to do now.

I want to ask our prayer teams at all of our campuses to come forward. We want to give you an opportunity to pray with them. There are three groups of people in here today who need to come forward to pray.

Some of you are dealing with hurt, and you need to call out to the Lord. Have someone cry out with you.

Some of you are walking with someone who is hurting, come forward and let's cry out to God together for help for that person.

Some of you are hurting because of sin in your life that you have yet to confess. God's word says that if you confess your sin, Jesus is faithful and just to forgive you of those sins, but if you aren't bringing it out, it can't be forgiven. You have a chance to do that today.

I'll pray, and then you come.

