

## Psalm 13

In Psalm 13 there is one main thought that stands out and one main word that we can use to express that thought. That one main thought is *patience*. You might hear that word *patience* at school: your teachers tell you sometimes, “Just be patient.” We use that word *patience* in our lives as we go through afflictions and trials: “Be patient; wait on the Lord.” We need to know this morning, what is patience?

That word we use so often, *patience*, has a very specific meaning. *Patience* means *the strength to bear up or endure in the midst of trouble and affliction*. You don’t have to say to someone who has no trouble, “Be patient”; but you say to someone who has trouble or is waiting for something, “Be patient.” It is the strength to bear up or endure in the midst of affliction.

In Psalm 13 that patience is illustrated in the psalmist’s life. The psalmist begins the psalm with four “how longs,” which show the great difficulty that he was in and that he had to endure for a long time. These were not light afflictions, as we might count affliction; these were heavy afflictions on the soul of the psalmist. And so in verse 1 he asks, “How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever?” The psalmist felt as if God had forgotten him. He was thinking this way: “The trouble that I’m enduring is so heavy upon me that it seems like God has forgotten me.” And then, continuing that same thought in verse 1, “How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?” Then in verse 2, “How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily?” That is a description of the psalmist’s inward thoughts and the turmoil that was in his soul. When he woke up, his heart was heavy with sorrow. When he went to his work, his heart was heavy with sorrow. When he lay down at night, his heart was heavy. All he could think about—the counsel in his soul—was the heaviness and the sorrow that he endured. Then at the end of verse 2, “How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?” And David speaks again of his enemies in verse 4: “Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him; and those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved.”

As is so often the case in the psalms, David was troubled by his enemies. We have seen before that the psalms show very clearly the antithesis, the spiritual division and separation, that there is between God’s people and the enemies of God’s people. The psalms show very clearly the enmity that God has placed between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman because Jesus Christ is the psalmist, and therefore all this enmity is centered on him. All of the opposition of the foe is against him, so that in the psalms this antithesis and enmity comes out again and again. Here in Psalm 13 the psalmist refers to those enemies again. They troubled him. They were waiting for him to fall and working for that fall and couldn’t wait to say, “We have prevailed against him” and to rejoice when the psalmist would fall.

So we have here in Psalm 13 the psalmist’s enduring for a long time great afflictions, great troubles, great sorrows. And that is true of the people of God as well. In the midst of our earthly sojourn, there are many afflictions to endure: afflictions from the foe, afflictions from our circumstances, afflictions that make it seem as if the hand of the Lord rests heavy upon us, afflictions that keep us awake at night, afflictions that run through our minds during the day.

Patience is the gift of God of strength to endure and bear up under those long-running afflictions and troubles. The psalmist speaks of that comfort and strength in verses 3–4, as he prays to Jehovah God. That is the second main division of the psalm. Verses 1–2 are the question, “How long?” Verses 3–4 are the prayer “Consider and hear me, O LORD my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death; lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him; and those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved.” Here is the psalmist’s petition: “Think on me! Consider me! And hear me, O Lord my God.”

When the psalmist prays, “Lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death,” he is saying to God, “Give me life and strength in my heart and soul that I may endure these afflictions.” He speaks of it as lightening his eyes, which is a very vivid and picturesque way of describing this strength. When the child of God is bowed down under trouble, when those troubles weigh upon his soul, that sometimes can be

seen in his face or in his eyes. He has dead eyes, hollow eyes, troubled eyes as those pressures weigh down upon him. And he prays, "Give me such strength in my heart and in my soul that my face shines and my eyes are alight with the strength that thou dost give."

Then, in verses 5–6, the psalmist shows the secret of this patience. How is it that the child of God can endure under the afflictions of this life and the opposition of the foe? How is it that the child of God can be patient? "But I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation. I will sing unto the LORD, because he hath dealt bountifully with me." The secret to patience is not found inside of us. The secret to patience is not found in our getting the right mindset about how we're going to face our afflictions. The secret is not found in digging deep and dealing with these things. The secret to patience is not found in what we might call a stoic approach to all of these things, saying, "Well, I can endure this. I know it's hard, but I'm just going to get through it," and relying on our own arm of strength. The secret to patience is not found in us. When a man relies upon himself to endure the afflictions, he will not and cannot endure them. There simply is no strength in us. The secret to patience is found outside of us in the love of God.

The psalmist speaks of that love repeatedly. "I have trusted in thy *mercy*"—that is God's abiding love that does not waver, does not flicker, and does not fail. Though our strength fails, though our hearts fail within us, the love of God does not waver. God displayed that unwavering love to his people again and again in the history of the church. That unwavering love sustained Israel through the long years in Egypt and brought them out. That unwavering love of God brought them through the wilderness. That unwavering love of God brought them into the land of promise. That unwavering love of God gathers his church in this New Testament age because the church cannot gather herself and cannot preserve herself. God's love is unwavering.

Especially God showed his unwavering love when he sent the Lord Jesus Christ to the cross in our place. There you see the mercy and the love of Jehovah God. God has done all things for his church, including slaying his only begotten Son that we might live with him.

"I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation." That salvation is what God's mercy is: salvation from our sin, our death; salvation from the opposition of the foe, so that though the foe may even kill us, he does not have the victory over us.

"I will sing unto the LORD, because he hath dealt bountifully with me." There too is the love of God: the bounties, the overflowing bounties, of salvation that the Lord gives to us, so that even in the midst of the greatest affliction, with all those "how longs" pressing upon our soul, the child of God can say, "But I will sing. I will sing praise to thy name. For thou hast dealt bountifully with me."

The secret to patience is not found in us; the secret to patience is found outside of us in the mercy of God in Jesus Christ. And the blessed news of the gospel is that the Lord Jesus Christ was perfectly patient. He endured and suffered long. This is his psalm of patience. *He* said, "How long? How long?" as all his life long he bore the wrath of God against our sins. Though he bore that wrath especially at the end, he bore it all his life. "How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?" Jesus had many nights when he did not sleep but spent the entire night in prayer. "How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?" Jesus was opposed by men at every turn. Yet Jesus knew the mercy of God, knew the bounties of Jehovah that Jehovah poured out upon him, and endured all that affliction and all that suffering. The Lord Jesus Christ was perfectly patient.

And that patience of our Lord he has not only done *for* us, so that now you don't have to be patient to obtain anything; but the Lord has also given that patience *to* us as a gift. The Lord Jesus Christ, who is the revelation of the love of God, *is* the patience of the saints in the midst of all our afflictions. That is a beautiful, wonderful truth for the child of God.

"How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD?...I will sing unto the LORD, because he hath dealt bountifully with me."