

How Long?

How to Move from Anguish to Peace

Psalm 13:1 *"To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.*

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."

Psalm 13

Theodosia

MOST CHRISTIANS GROWING UP with a hymnal have heard of **Fanny Crosby**, one of the 19th century's most gospel song writers. A hundred years earlier, the Christian music scene (you probably couldn't really call it that) dubbed "the

golden age of hymnody,”¹ was dominated by the likes of Isaac Watts (Independent), Charles Wesley (Methodist), John Newton and William Cowper (Anglican). But onto that Mr. Rushmore of musical giants could be chiseled the feeble likeness of Theodosia, better known as Anne Steele, a woman who gave everything she had to God in the form of poem and song.

Anne’s life was filled with much earthly sorrow. Though born in 1717 to a fairly wealthy family in Hampshire, England, her mother died when she was but three years old. She was baptized at 14 where she joined her father’s Particular Baptist congregation. Yes, she was a Calvinist. Like so many in her day, Anne had very delicate health. She suffered from the ague (malaria), fits (high fevers), anemia, possibly consumption (tuberculosis), stomach problems (colic, IBS, and peptic ulceration), toothaches, swelling of the face, chronic bronchitis, and often underwent the exciting treatments of blood-letting, blistering fomentations, purges, and drinking tar-water.²

¹ Louis F. Benson, *The English Hymn: Its Development and use in Worship* (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1915), 213.

² Michael F. Dixon & Hugh F. Steele-Smith, "Anne Steele's Health: A Modern Diagnosis," *Baptist Quarterly* 32.7 (July 1988), 351-356, http://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/bq/32-7_351.pdf.

She suffered an injury on a hoire while a young girl that perhaps contributed to her becoming an invalid.³ She was confined to bed for most of her adult life. Things got worse when her fiancé drown while bathing in a river below town just hours prior to their wedding. Apparently, “His shrieks were heard in the town and the place is still called, on account of this painful circumstance, ‘Elcomb’s hole’.”⁴ Yet, despite her constant turmoil and anguish, her doctor referred to her “native cheerfulness” and ability to “give pleasure to all around her.” How?

Perhaps since she had little to do but lay around, she took a liking to poetry. She wrote many hymns and put many Psalms to English rhyme as well, including our Psalm today, Psalm 13. It was in studying for this Psalm that I ran across Anne’s story, as someone finished their own study of this Psalm with her rendition of it.⁵ One biographer writes that two main themes dominate her poems. The first reflects her health, which the second explains how she nevertheless had serenity and cheer about her. She is known for her

³ Some of her biographers have written about this, but others cast doubt on its severity. See Dixon & Steele-Smith, 351.

⁴ J. Ivimey, *History of the English Baptists*, IV, 1830, 312.

⁵ Stephen L. Dolson-Andrew, “An Exegesis of Psalm 13,” *Chafer Theological Seminary Journal* 10:1 (2004): 49-71.

“sorrowful hymns” brought about by melancholy⁶ and “a morbid dissatisfaction with life”:⁷

Ah! Why should this mistaken mind
Still rove with restless pain?
Delight on earth expect to find,
Yet still expect in vain?

The brightest day, alas, how vain!
With conscious sighs we own;
While clouds of sorrow, care and pain,
O’ershade the smiling noon

Yet, Anne was able to overcome this. How? The antidote was found in “an intense devotion to Christ’s person, especially the Savior’s name”:

The Saviour! O what endless charms
Dwell in the blissful sound!
Its influence every fear disarms,

⁶ Dixon & Steele-Smith, 351.

⁷ Ronald W. Thompson, “Anne Steele, 1716-1778,” *The Baptist Quarterly* 21 (Oct 1966), 369 [368-71]. http://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/bq/21-8_368.pdf, last accessed Nov 2, 2016.

And spreads sweet comfort round.

Jesus, the spring of joys divine,
Where all my hopes and comforts flow;
Jesus, no other name but Thine,
Can save me from eternal woe.

Anne understood [the secret of moving from anguish to peace](#).

Perhaps because she was a women, two full books were published under her pseudonym ([Theodosia](#)), making her the Particular Baptist counterpart to the others in their respective Denominations. She was, as someone has said of her, “[without question, the foremost Baptist hymn writer](#)”⁸ of the 18th century. High praise indeed.

Anne’s story made me think of [King David](#) who we know at the end of his life while maybe not bed-ridden, was [terminally sick](#) and could not keep himself warm ([2Kg 1:1](#)). With several of his psalms talking about his bones wasting away, some have speculated that perhaps his later disease was related to an earlier one, or that he may have suffered from

⁸ Several have said this. I found the quote in [Dixon & Steele-Smith](#), 351.

osteoporosis, hyperparathyroidism, or malignancy of some kind.⁹ But David never let his circumstances, no matter what they were, control and ruin his life. Like Anne, he found his solace in the Savior. Thus it is that two people are connected through long spans of time in their love for poetry, analysis of pain, and love for Christ.

Psalm 13

Psalm 13 is a **song of lament**. Importantly (as I will suggest for why it was written), it is **the shortest and most concise example** of this type of Psalm in the Psalter. Someone has written that it “**comprehends [the] essential elements [of individual laments] so completely that to know it is to have an introduction to the others.**”¹⁰ In other words, if you deal with sorrow in your life, you *need* to know Psalm 13. In this Psalm, David is not focusing on any kind of physical sickness, but rather as he has so many times already

⁹ **Liubov** (Louba) Ben-Noun, “What Was the Disease of the Bones that Affected King David?” *Journals of Gerontology Series A: Biological Sciences and Medical Sciences* 57A:3 (Mar 2002): M152-54, <http://biomedgerontology.oxfordjournals.org/content/57/3/M152.full.pdf>; Liubov (Louba) Ben-Noun, “Was the Biblical King David Affected by Hypothermia?” *Journals of Gerontology Series A: Biological Sciences and Medical Sciences* 57:6 (2002): M364-67, <http://biomedgerontology.oxfordjournals.org/content/57/6/M364.full.pdf>.

¹⁰ **James L. Mays**, “Psalm 13” [Expository Article], *Int* 34 (July 1980): 279.

in the Psalter, upon his mental anguish and distress brought about by “his enemy” (Ps 13:2, 4).

We do not know the exact circumstance of this Psalm, though some have speculated (like Theodoret who said it is not about Saul, but about Absalom).¹¹ Therefore, its brevity may very well reflect that in this case David means this to be a model psalm, something for you to memorize and emulate. As king, David stands as a representative worshiper who wants to help others. As such, he accomplishes four things in this short song that becomes a model for you to follow:

1. He expresses his own suffering, thereby encouraging others who suffer, because a hurting individual often needs to know that he is not alone in his suffering—others can identify with him.
2. He sets forth a model of moral and spiritual strength in the face of severe adversity.
3. He teaches others how to pray in times of crisis.

¹¹ Theodoret of Cyrus, *Commentary on the Psalms 1–72*, trans. Robert C. Hill, vol. 101, *The Fathers of the Church* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 104.

4. He **finishes with faith**, demonstrating that the Lord is our sole refuge. He is strong to save, and His covenant-love is forever reliable.¹²

The Psalm has a very simply **three-point structure** that you can follow in your own prayers:

1. Lament (1-2)
2. Petition (3-4)
3. Expression of Faith (5-6)

All three of these are important. Some people miss one or more of these to their own harm.

- *No Lamenting*. Some **put on the happy face**, expressing this amazing faith to the world, but never letting others know that they are human. They don't cry out in front of others. So people think they are perfect. David did cry out. If the king can do it, why can't you?
- *No Petitioning*. Others **keep this all bottled up inside**, thinking that they could never approach a Holy God with

¹² **Dolson-Andrew**, 67.

such matters as this, thinking that perhaps they are too trivial for him to care about, or that since he is Sovereign, praying about them won't do any good. Therefore, **they never petition the throne of grace** with requests related directly to the great sorrow they are experiencing. That is why this is a perfect model prayer when life causes you to lament and circumstances cause you to cry. **It shows the way forward**, while being honest about the present and the past.

- *No Movement towards Faith.* Still others grieve, but **don't know how to get out from under the grief**. The crying, the weeping, the mourning, the pity-parties become an end to themselves. This is spiritually dangerous. Morbidly, the grief and sorrow become comfortable places, like a slave who refuses his freedom and returns to the master who beats him all because they have never known anything else, and the thought of hope actually terrifies them. Beloved, we grieve, but not as others who have no hope (**1Th 4:13**).

Let's therefore look at Psalm 13 and see how the Holy Spirit inspired David to express his frustrations, petition his God, and relied upon the LORD.

Lamentation (Psalm 13:1-2)

The Psalm begins “**To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.**” As usual, the LXX has, “**For the End.**” This was the translation of our Fathers, and oh, how I pray God would restore the love of knowing Christ in all of the Scripture to those in our day as it was in the past. It is astonishing to read them consistently take these introductions and read them with Christ as the reason the psalm exists. For example, Augustine said, “**What ‘to the end’ means, must not be too often repeated. ‘For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes’ (Rom 10:4) as the Apostle says. We believe on Him, when we begin to enter on the good road: we shall see Him, when we shall get to the end. And therefore is He the end.**”¹³

With Christ on our minds, the words of David thus begin, “**How long, O LORD?**” Feel this deep longing of the Christian. Have you ever cried it? It is a phrase found 20 times in the Psalter. One fifth of those are found in this very

¹³ **Augustine** of Hippo, “Expositions on the Book of Psalms,” in *Saint Augustin: Expositions on the Book of Psalms*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 8, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, First Series (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1888), 46.

short song:

How long ... will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me? (vs. 1)

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? (vs. 1)

In this way, these first two verses are the lament of the song. Four maddeningly crescendoing cries: how long, how long, how long, HOW LONG! Anyone who knows the presence of evil has had the same deeply felt question. Zechariah, “How long will you have no mercy on Jerusalem” (Zech 1:12). Habakkuk, “O LORD, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you ‘Violence!’ and you will not save?” (Hab 1:2). Even the saints of Revelation—our brothers and sisters martyred for their faith, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” (Rev 6:10). Yes, the question does not go away simply because Jesus Christ came a first time.

Now, evil people do not cry “how long?” They laugh at

it. They do not scream for justice; they hotly pursue the just (10:2). Evil people do not cry out to God, they ignorantly forget him (10:4). Evil people do not wonder “how long” before God acts, because they have convinced themselves he never will (10:11). Everyone sees the immediate lack of direct divine intervention. Believers. Unbelievers. We all see it. But the wicked come to a very different conclusion. Theirs is not the conclusion of longing, but the delusion of using and plotting, not the submission of one under authority, but the hallucination that “there is no lord over me” (Ps 12:4), not the belief that Christ is the end, but that they are the end.

But the life blood that flows through the Christian longs desperately for God to make things right, for if he does not, then evil really is ultimate, wickedness really is definitive, mischief really is foundational. And there is nothing that is right or good about that. Goodness would therefore be a trick. Righteousness a mirage. Each man simply does what is right in his own eyes. The rich get richer. The poor get poorer. The wicked get more evil. The good get trounced. So it goes. If this is true, then you might as well either join ‘em or become a Buddhist and pretend that the whole thing

is just a ridiculous illusion to make it feel like it isn't really all that bad.

But the Christian cannot do either. We know it is not an illusion. It is real. We know we can do little to nothing about it. But we also believe God is real. We cannot escape what he has put into our souls. So we cry out to Him. Christians cry out to God! It is a model for you to follow. The cry begins “*will you forget me forever?*” Notice the relationship between “the end” and “forever.” Augustine saw it and believed that David’s forever is being compared to the introduction to the Psalm. Which will win? Christ the End or God forgetting forever? And yet while you answer with your head, beloved, do not skip right past this. Feel David’s feeling. Then know that to have the feeling is not evil. To pretend you don’t, very well might be. When evil or suffering triumph, this is not the way God created the world. It is not good. Should we just be happy about evil when God himself is not? It feels like God has forgotten.

It is important to emphasize here that *David’s first longing* in his words “*will you forget me forever*” reflect his *feelings*. Some people are dominated by their feelings. Reason seems utterly unable to grab hold of them. Others

pretend as if they don't have any, indeed like no one should have any, even themselves "feeling" as if feelings are something that belong to the evil world of matter or something. "Better to be stoic, void of all feeling whatsoever, like God is," they think. David doesn't. He has feelings. He is in touch with them. He faces them head on. He tells them to you!

The second longing is parallel to the first. "How long will you hide your face from me?" The feeling that God has forgotten him is accompanied by another feeling that God is hiding his face. While God does not forget his child, he does sometimes hide his *smiling* face from him. This is known as discipline. And thus, this may or may not be merely a feeling David has. Has he done something to deserve this? Is God really hiding himself from David? The answers do not matter, because at this point in the song, he is simply lamenting in prayer. He is telling God how he feels, whether his feelings reflect reality or not not.

I fear that too many people refuse to deal with feelings like this. They stuff them down, pretending that they are not there, only to find themselves exploding like volcanoes in other parts of their lives through other more intense and

harmful ones such as rage, violence, or anger. Burying emotions like “God has left me” can be extremely destructive. If you won’t find them out, they will find you out. And they will win.

Why? Because those feelings create intense sorrow in a person’s heart. And this sorrow leads to worse things. First, the sorrow. **His third longing**, “**How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day?**” (2). David does not want to go to his soul for treatment, but that is what his feeling that God has abandoned him causes him to do. But the only kind of doctor David’s soul can be for him is **Dr. Jekyll** or **Dr. Frankenstein**. All his soul creates in him is intense sorrow all the day. The more he takes counsel in himself, the more sorrow he he heaps upon his heart. Something’s got to give.

If he stays here, he will become a monster. Add now **the fourth longing**, “**How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?**” Now we come to the rub of the matter, where the true burn is really originating. As I said earlier, in this case it is not some physical ailment, but an external enemy. When an enemy is after you, when he is winning, and when he is exalting himself over you, the feelings of abandonment and

sorrow do not last forever. Soon, they turn into rage and anger and violence and unforgiveness. Because you desperately want something to happen to stop them. If God won't act, then maybe you will.

But in admitting his *feeling* that God is taking his time rather than concluding that there is no God, **he short-circuits the anger** for the closer emotions of sorrow and abandonment. This prevents him in the short term from becoming angry. But how he deals with his emotions are now the absolutely vital part.

From the beginning, David's thought has **never been to make his emotions an end to themselves**. That can only lead to destruction. Instead, as Augustine says again, “**For Christ is the end of the law to every one that believeth.**’ **‘How long, O Lord, wilt Thou forget me unto the end?’** (ver. 1) **that is, put me off as to spiritually understanding Christ, who is the Wisdom of God, and the true end of all the aim of the soul.**”¹⁴

¹⁴ **Augustine** of Hippo, “Expositions on the Book of Psalms,” in *Saint Augustin: Expositions on the Book of Psalms*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 8, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, First Series (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1888), 45.

Cassiodorus (c. 485–c. 580) was so bold as to say even of the beginning of vs. 1, “He [David] asks for the appearance of Christ, whom he had long foreseen in spirit. For his face is that which could appear before bodily eyes, which that holy man uttering this general sentiment rightly desired to see, for that face by its manifestation from heaven deigned to save the world.”¹⁵ I agree with both of them, as Christ is always the hope of the saints of God. And with this knowledge firmly in mind, David moves now from lament to petition.

Petition

“Consider and answer me, O LORD my God; light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death, lest my enemy say, ‘I have prevailed over him,’ lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken” (Ps 13:3-4). Lamentation is necessary in a Christian’s life. But without petition, it is a poison to the

¹⁵ Cassiodorus, Explanation of the Psalms 13.1, *Ancient Christian Writers* 51:146, <https://books.google.com/books?id=aX5LVObh1BgC&pg=PA146&lpg=PA146&dq=He+ask+s+for+the+appearance+of+Christ%2C+whom+he+had+long+foreseen+in+spirit.+For+his+face+is+that+which+could+appear+before+bodily+eyes&source=bl&ots=VcPoQ9UUBe&sig=UenqyU56iXQ95YICKP4U3u8BPs&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwj97bH0-4fQAhUNxWMKHxOoDzUQ6AEIITAB#v=onepage&q=%22appearance%20of%20Christ%22&f=false>

soul. A very deadly poison! Petitioning the throne of God draws the poison out.

David asks the LORD to consider him. In **vs. 1** he says he feels like God has **forgotten** him. Now, he asks the LORD to **consider** him (**vs. 3**). He is letting his mind now stand like a warrior between his feelings and deeper trouble that they might cause. He knows that God has not actually forgotten him, and that is why he asks God to “consider” him. **This is a first step in moving from grief to gladness.** Realize that your feelings are quite probably betraying you. This can only happen if you admit them and confess them. But after that, only if you let the truth of the matter come out in petition to the LORD.

Not only does David ask to be considered (“**what is man that you are mindful of him?**” “**You have given him dominion**”), but he petitions God to answer him. David is in great need because of his sorrow that his feelings and the enemy about him are producing. What does he want God to answer?

He asks only one thing. He asks for **his countenance to be restored.** “**O LORD my God; light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death.**” Have you ever seen someone with

truly lit up eyes? They glimmer and sparkle and are intoxicating to look into, for they are alive like the very stars of the heavens. Jesus said, “**The eye is the lamp of the body**” (**Matt 6:22**). In this case, it is the the soul. David’s sight has caused the lamp of his eyes to grow dim. They have no sparkle. They are dull, bloodshot, glazed-over, like a person in a trance. Like someone with severe cataracts who has live 100 years. They have become a reflection of inner disease. He was unable to see his God; all he could see are were circumstances. He needs the LORD to light up his eyes, to restore inner vitality, spiritual energy, godly focus. He needs to LORD to bring back his sparkle of life.

He knows if the LORD does not answer him, it will be the opposite. **The first of three reasons** now presents itself. “**Lest I sleep the sleep of death.**” The lamentation of the first two verses leads inevitably to death, for life with a God who is angry at him is like dying itself, and feelings like these eat away at your very life-force inside, chewing into a million pieces.

Contrasting this with lighting up his eyes, David is therefore praying here for **a kind of resurrection**, and more. I believe he is even **foreseeing the resurrection of our Lord**

Jesus himself. Why? **Psalm 13:1** has very close affinity to **Psalm 22:1**, “My God, my God. Why have you forsaken me?” There are many parallels with these two psalms, and this desperate sense of abandonment is something our Lord Jesus also felt as he lamented these very words on the cross. What great sorrow of soul our Lord felt, what angst over the enemies that were trying to kill him in Psalm 22, and yet what hope, as that Psalm speaks of resurrection and of the Lord Jesus singing songs in the congregation of the saints forever (**Heb 2:12**). With these parallels, David is asking not only for a typological resurrection in being restored to vitality and life rather than facing the long night of sleep. The Holy Spirit is helping us foresee the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

This thought must continue in **the last two reasons** which are parallel. First, “**Lest my enemy say, ‘I have prevailed over him,’** As God’s anointed (*messiah*), David cannot stand the thought of his enemies prevailing and rejoicing over him because he is shaken. Rather, the promise was the reverse, “**The seed of the woman will crush the head.**” David is in that direct lineage. Therefore, not through physical victory over the enemies, but through the

spiritual victory of resurrection (his eyes relit) will true and lasting victory be attained.

Indeed, **Christ's resurrection was the ultimate defeat of his enemies**. No physically, of course. But spiritually. It spelled their final doom. Because Christ has risen and ascended, no enemy can ever say that because we are shaken, they have prevailed. As Peter says because of this, “**Angels, authorities, and powers hav[e] been subjected to him**” (1Pe 3:22). This is the great belief of the martyrs. Yes, they cry out “how long?” But, they also know that no Caesar, no Pope, no earthly king, no tyrant can ever say that they have prevailed. For Christ alone has prevailed.

Second, “... **lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken**” (Ps 13:4). Not only is his resurrection the answer to our enemies. It is also the answer to his and our shaking. Not necessarily that we won't shake. But again, He is not shaken. The mountains will shake at His Coming. But He is the unshakable Rock of our salvation. Jesus has prevailed, and He is not shaken. All of this is tied up in the resurrection that David is typologically asking for when he asks God to light up his eyes, lest he sleep the sleep of death.

Beloved, there is a resurrection from the dead, one where even in dying, we do not die. It is offered to any who will do what David does next. Listen carefully to the last part of the psalm, for **this is the key to eternal life** and of eternal life being lived out here in the flesh.

Faith

With this request having now come off his lips, his heart is already being renewed, and his soul is moving quickly out of the state of despair. He has prayed. He has believed that God can answer. This final step completes the psalm and the pattern he is establishing to anyone who truly hears and understands the psalms message. **While important to confess** your feelings in prayer to God, and even publicly even if only through song to one another, and **while necessary to then petition God** to change not only them but your very soul itself, the true key is the immediate hope that springs to life in the heart of a true believer. It is hope of faith. **Faith** must be present. You who would cry out to God like this, believe!

“**But I have trusted...**” (**Ps 13:5**). This trusting is true faith. The word (*batach*) means to trust, to be confident, to

rely upon, be secure, to fear nothing. This is the definition of biblical faith. Especially when we consider what he is trusting in. All trust, all faith must have **an object**. What is the object of David's trust?

“**Steadfast love.**” The word here is *hesed*. This is no ordinary love. It is God's **covenantal love**. Think about David. God came to him with a covenant promise in line with the other covenant promises of the OT. He would have a seed. He would have great blessings. This God would be his God. Not just any God, but Yahweh. **Yahweh is the covenantal name** of God, given to Moses at the burning bush.

Christ became the fullness of those promises. And in Christ Jesus, all of the promises are Yes! And Amen! For he has brought **a new covenant**. This new covenant is not just for David. It is for all who put their trust in Christ alone! Anyone who does this, anyone who believes this God, these promises, anyone who cries out like this and petitions this God for this kind of life, they will be saved. And in a world with increasingly wicked and powerful enemies around us, is that not good news? And the word does not return void, for it pleases God that many of you here will hear and

believe through the Word preached.

What person does not have feelings like David had? Is that you? Then do not stuff them down. Cry out to the LORD. Do not make them an end to themselves, but petition the God of all creation to light up your eyes and give you eternal life. It is now becoming clear that this psalm is the very model of salvation itself. It needs to be *your* prayer.

When it is, when you have trusted, then look. “My heart shall rejoice in your salvation” (5). David knows that God not only *will* save him, but that he *has*. The fire in his eyes are already rekindling. His pulse of his heart is already starting to beat once more. For to have faith in Christ is to have life, it is to have salvation, it is to rejoice in the inner man, no matter what enemy besets you.

What then is left to do? **Worship**. The Psalms so often end in worship. Why? It is **the chief end of man**. This is why his poem was set to music, the reason it is sung. “I will sing to the LORD, because he has dealt bountifully with me” (6). Do you see how the psalm have moved from a state of **utter desperation** and longing and inward grief to outward **displays of worship and faith**, and rejoicing with the heart

and the mouth? Beloved, this is what Christians do. Yes, we experience the first two verses. Never say you don't. Never say you shouldn't. But move into the hope of the promises by petitioning your bountiful God who has given you so very many blessings in Christ. Then sing with joy and watch your life return anew. Praise the God of creation. Praise the Name of the LORD.

David understood this. This is also what Anne understood. Her take on Psalm 13 is mostly a translation, except at one important point. At this point, she makes the psalm her own.

“Psalm 13”

How long will you, O God of grace,
Forget accustomed love?
How long conceal your shining face,
Or bid the cloud remove?

How long shall my dejected soul,
Thus pondering o'er her woes,
In vain endeavor to control
The power of inward foes?

The Psalm says enemies. Annie says “inward foes.” Anne isn’t content to sing David’s song, to live out David’s life. She has her own life. She had her own problems. Just like you do. She had no physical enemies trying to kill her. Neither do I ... right now. But she still had her own very real enemy. The ravages of bad health upon her increasingly frail body. A mother who died in her infancy whom she will never be able to talk to or get advise from. A fiancé who drown on the day of her wedding. Intense sorrow in her heart. Great longing for things to turn around. A melancholy disposition that caused her to write so many songs that were of the negative sort. As I have said, Anne’s many other poems are almost obsessed with the bad things in life. Unlike so many of our contemporary songs, but like so many of the prophets of Israel, she laments. And she does it often.

But *her hope was not in lamenting*. Her hope was in Jesus. Her hope was in praying to him and praising him in the midst of her suffering. Her hope was in Psalm 13:

*Lord, hear my prayer, and heal my woes,
Arise with cheering light;*

Or soon these wretched eyes will close
In everlasting night.

The powers of darkness will rejoice
To see my life decay,
And triumph with insulting voice
Around their trembling prey.

But, Lord, your mercy previously
Has been my only trust;
Now my joys renew by mercy,
And raise me from the dust.

Then will my heart and tongue proclaim
The bounties of my God,
My songs with grateful rapture flame,
And spread your praise abroad.¹⁶

Athanasius said, “Though [it] lasts a very long time, do not lose heart, as though God had forgotten you, but call on the Lord, singing Psalm 13” (Athanasius, *On the Interpretation*

¹⁶ I found this hymn in Stephen L. Dolson-Andrew, “An Exegesis of Psalm 13,” *Chafer Theological Seminary Journal Volume 10* 10, no. 1 (2004): 70–71. I have modernized the language.

of the Psalms 16). The valiant warrior of the Trinity speaks well. For this psalm is the great model of lamentation in the Bible. It's threefold division: lament, petition, and faith moves you biblically from the reality of your feelings to the truth of God's word and the freedom and release that are to be found only in it.

May the great God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit bless your troubled soul and give you peace.