

What actually happens when you're in the middle of a crisis, and you put your faith in God? Does praying make you feel better right away; does it make all your worries disappear? We shouldn't imagine that all you have to do is to set your mind to it, to say to yourself, I trust God, and then pray, and everything will be okay. It doesn't always go that way. And if trusting in God doesn't make you feel better right away, you might start wondering what's wrong with you, or with your faith.

Psalm 13 gives us a kind of close up view of what it means, to exercise our faith. The scholars call this kind of psalm a lament. We might say, David's complaining about God. How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever?

Should a believer ever feel that way? If we really believe in God's promises, could we ever question God like that? It seems as if a real believer would never complain about what He's doing in our lives.

So how should we think about David's complaints? We could say, He was just being honest. This is how he felt. These were the questions that kept running through his mind. And he wasn't getting any answers. Whatever he was going through, he couldn't understand what the LORD was doing.

David was wrestling with his thoughts. He couldn't get out of it; he couldn't put it all together. We have that too. Why does God let innocent people, little children even, suffer starvation and war and abuse? Why does God deal with me the way He does? Wouldn't it be to His glory, to set things right, to make my child better, to set me free from the sin that I'm struggling with? Isn't that what He wants for us? So how come He doesn't do it?

David speaks about mental anguish, confusion and pain in our thoughts, in our minds. Some of us struggle with that our whole lives. Our thoughts make us feel like we're all alone. Things don't add up. Because it seems like my enemy is exalted over me. It seems like God doesn't care.

And when we're confused about what the LORD is doing, it's okay to speak honestly to Him about that. This

is what God wants us to do. Come here, to your Father; tell Me what's bothering you. Because I'm right here, and I'm ready to listen. So David says to God, What's going on?

But we have to listen carefully to what David actually says. How long are You going to ignore what's happening to me, and to your people? We can tell that he's frustrated. But don't misunderstand his frustration. He's not pouting, like a spoiled child, because God isn't making things go his way. He's wondering about God's promises. The covenant He made with Israel, and with David. David isn't asking these questions because he's lost his faith in God. It's exactly because he has put his faith in God. He's frustrated because he expects God to do what He promised. And he's confused, because he can't see how the things that were happening to him squared with what God had promised.

His complaint is the complaint of faith. By asking, How long?, David's saying, I know that You're faithful, so I expect You to do what You said You would do. But when are You going to do it? This is actually what it looks like to exercise our faith, to live by faith, when we're confused.

That's what Paul talks about in the letter he wrote to believers in Rome. He's talking in chapter 8 to suffering Christians, who were confused by what God was doing. He reminds them of what God has promised them. He talks about the glory that is to be revealed to us, that God is going to redeem our bodies. God has said, I'm going to heal every sickness and every handicap. I'm going to give you endless and abundant life, I'm going to take away every weakness of your bodies and every disease of your minds. That means, complete salvation from sin. That is the glory that is to be revealed in us, or, to us.

And Paul says to those believers, We already have a sample of that glory in the work of the Holy Spirit. In the changes that He's making in us. In the love and the honesty and the humility that we see coming to life in us. But, now that we've had that first taste of what God has promised us, we want it all. We don't want to wait for it; it's so wonderful, and we need it so much, that we want it all now. But God is making us wait. And while we wait, we're groaning. Groaning in frustration, groaning in expectation. That's what David's doing in Psalm 13. He's groaning with expectation, with longing, to see God's promises fulfilled. That's what faith

does. So God wants to hear us groaning, lamenting, complaining, because we want everything that He's promised us.

David calls on the LORD, to remind God of the covenant He made, and the oath that He swore. 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. And God doesn't consider it disrespectful, for David to do that. That's what God wants us to do, because it means that we do take Him at His Word.

And David says, LORD, Your reputation, Your glory, Your Word, are all at stake in my struggle. Unless You step in, unless You act to save me, I will sleep in death. And if that happens, then my enemy will say, I have overcome him! And my foes will rejoice when I fall. And You just can't let that happen, because You have made a covenant with me, and so Your Name, O LORD, is tied up with what happens to me.

God has staked His reputation on what happens to His children. In Exodus 32, when Israel worshipped the golden calf at Mt. Sinai, the LORD said to Moses, Step aside, because I'm going to destroy them! Then Moses didn't say, O LORD, they didn't mean it; or, O LORD, I'm sure they've learned their lesson, and they'll never do it again. The LORD said that Israel was a stiff-necked people, and Moses didn't deny it. But he said, LORD, think what our enemies will say, if You destroy us! They'll say that You brought us here with evil intent – they'll say that You're a liar, and that the gospel is a lie. Remember Your promise, O LORD. And, for the sake of Your Name and Your Word, relent, and do not destroy them.

That's how David prays here in Psalm 13. God's children are allowed to pray that way, to ask God to pay attention to us, that God will give us the inheritance He has promised us. For the glory of His Name, and His Word.

And that brought light to David's eyes. That gave him light that shone through the darkness; that put everything in a whole new light. I trust in Your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in Your salvation. David's confession is emphatic: the great reality, the great truth, for me, is, Your unfailing love. Your covenant love;

that is to say, the love that You swore to me, the faithful love of God, the steadfast love of God.

David says, I trust in the love that God has shown for His special people, Israel, and for me. Think of the way God dealt with Israel, with His people through the ages. Think of the way God has dealt with you. And ask yourself, Why? Why has God been so patient, so faithful, so forgiving, toward such obstinate, selfish, foolish, people as you and me? The story of Israel, and of God's people through the ages, my story and yours, is the same: it's the story of God's gracious, covenant love.

God hasn't only promised to love us. He has loved us. And this is the key: Focus on what God has done, and you will have confidence in what He will do. Read the Word, and on every page, you'll read of the steadfast love of God. When we confess our faith together this afternoon, that's what we're doing: we're looking at what God has done, and, we're confessing our hope in the future, based on what He has done. And of course, of course, at the heart of all that God has done, there is Jesus Christ.

That's where Paul leads us in Romans 8. He says, We groan inwardly as we wait for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. We say, God, how long will it be, how much longer do we have to wait, until You finally do what You said You would do?

We don't know how long it will be, before our bodies are redeemed. But we have no doubt that they will be. Because God has promised it. Because God has given us the firstfruits of it. And because God has done something to demonstrate, beyond all question, that He will give it to us in all of its fullness, and glory.

This is the prayer, this is the confession that God brings us to, exactly by making us wait for the redemption of our bodies. By letting us experience the imperfection, the brokenness of life in this world, God make us long for the world to come; by letting us experience the persistent and frustrating power of sin, God makes us long to be redeemed completely, and forever. By letting us see and feel how much is wrong in this world, He makes us groan in expectation, He makes us long all the more fervently for the promised redemption of our bodies. And by the work of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of sonship, He brings this prayer of faith and

expectation to our lips: How long, O LORD?