

Counsel in the Dark Nights: *How To Find Hope in Hopeless Times.*

Biblical Counseling

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The Text:

Psalm 13:6 [13:5-6 Eng]:

וַאֲנִי בְּחֶסֶדְךָ בְּטַחְתִּי יְגַל לְבִי בִישׁוּעָתְךָ אֲשִׁיחָה לַיהוָה כִּי גָמַל עָלַי 6

Author's Translation:

But as for me, in your covenant love, I have trusted; my heart rejoices in your salvation. And I sing to the LORD because He has dealt bountifully with me.

In the context of Psalm 13, David cries out to God four times with the identical question: *How Long?* In essence, David finds himself gravely perplexed about his life circumstances. To name a few, David faces tremendous hardships such as: feeling forsaken by God (v.1a), feeling isolated or separated from God (v.1b), feeling burdened by excessive counseling in his soul (v.2a), weighed down with much sorrow and depression (v.2b), suffering from anxiety, bad relationships, and many enemies (v.2c), drawing near death or some life-threatening circumstance (v.3b), and fearing humiliation, loss of integrity, or defeat from foes (v.4).

In a state of utter helplessness and, perhaps, hopelessness, David lifts his voice to God and asks: “*How Long?*” this must all continue. He cannot bear under it any more. He feels abandoned by God. He feels overwhelmed by the situation. And he feels as though death will imminently strike. His heart feels crushed by the excessive weight of anxiety, relational discord, sorrow, depression, and humiliation.

At the end of the psalm, the tone changes dramatically and it is marked by a very significant particle that grammatically shows that David has altered his thinking. Verse 6 begins with: “*But as for me*” (וַאֲנִי). The mood changes. The entire tone alters. The focus and perspective of the psalm dramatically shifts. David resolves to trust in the *covenant-keeping love* (בְּחֶסֶדְךָ) of Yahweh. Not only that, he insists that his own *heart* (לְבִי) which was excessively burdened with sorrow earlier (v.2) now rejoices (loudly!) in God’s salvation for surely God has dealt bountifully with him. What changed? What prompted this radical shift? A few points deserve mention.

1. **The focus shifted away from David and onto God — and His gracious work in salvation.**
2. **The meditative thoughts were no longer on David’s enemies but now on God’s covenantal and, thus, His unbreakable love.**
3. **The resolve in David’s heart was not to permit angst and depression but now he demands that his heart gladly rejoice and loudly exult in God’s salvation wrought on his behalf.**
4. **David resolves to sing to the Lord as heartfelt songs dispel anxious thoughts in the heart.**
5. **David remembers what God has done for Him and how God has dealt so bountifully and, of course, undeservedly, on his behalf which further casts him into fervent, God-oriented worship.**

May God direct our hearts away from the excessive burden of dwelling on the painful feelings of the here and now and insist that our *heart* look upward to Christ & His graciously loving work on our behalf. Then, when the attitude of the heart changes, the lips will follow in heartfelt praise, and the life will be transformed in hope.