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Psalm 13

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HOW LONG, O LORD?

At one time or another, we have all probably felt like the young boy in the old Family Circus cartoon in which the boy comes home to face his dad after his baseball has had an encounter with a stained glass window at church. Or maybe you've felt like that unfortunate Virginia colonist of centuries past, his neck and wrists firmly stuck in wooden stocks in the public square because of some misdeed he had committed. His trouble was a little longer-lasting and a little more public. Or maybe you can relate to the way I felt at my sixth birthday party, which my parents thoughtfully arranged to be held at the Philadelphia zoo, and during which one of the zookeepers gently placed a long, slimy snake around my neck. (Why do zookeepers think kids will like that, anyway?) I was terrified, and though the zookeeper removed the snake after probably a minute, during that minute I felt like my terror would go on forever.

Have you ever felt like your afflictions will last forever? Have you felt forgotten, disconnected from God's promises, in deep distress that went on and on and on, with no end in sight? Maybe some of you are in that very place right now. For others, trials may be right around the corner, or may come later. As Bernard Bell comments, "We might expect that new life in Christ would bring an end to our pain. But God ... doesn't seem interested in giving us a pain-free life."¹ Our experience tells us that painful affliction comes from time to time, and coping with it is hard, even when we try to pray, read the Word and be faithful. We may even feel tempted to give up—on our situations, or even on God.

In Psalm 13, we'll see not only how King David handled deep pain (and get a great view into how to cope in our own deeply painful situations), we will also learn an important way to more freely connect with the Lord and to be restored to knowing His joy. This psalm also provides an unexpected invitation to open that box of pain you've kept carefully out of sight, and to be pleasantly surprised at what can be done with it. In short, today's text gives us practical help with the kind of pain we all have to deal with at one time or another. And like God can provide a hidden waterfall in the driest of deserts, I pray that He would lead us this morning to His hidden sources of water in the wilderness regions we find ourselves in.

Before we look into Psalm 13 together, you might like to know a little about my story and how it relates to our topic. Besides hosting some of our Sunday morning services, I'm perhaps best known here at PBCC for the size of my family, with our seven children ranging in age from 8 to 24. I actually grew up near Philadelphia with my younger sister, and our parents raised us with care and took us to church every Sunday. I appreciate and admire my parents as much as anyone I've ever known, and I'd like to wish my dad and all you fathers a very happy Fathers' Day today.

When I was 23, I moved to California to marry Sue, whom I'd met in college back east but who is from nearby Los Altos. I moved here partly to honor her and partly to pursue what seemed like a good opportunity—training for ministry through the PBC intern program. But God seemed to have other plans, as I put my ministry interest on hold to focus on my wife and kids, and on being faithful in my job at a law firm in Palo Alto, where I have now served for 27 years. For a long time, though, I've been uncomfortable, sometimes painfully so, feeling that I might be out of place.

While my life has not been as painful as some people's lives, I have spent a lot of years wishing I had more friends (perhaps some of you know how that feels), wishing my family lived closer to my parents, wishing our small three-bedroom house was bigger for the nine of us, dealing with people at work who were difficult for me, and watching my wife minister to our kids in incredible ways while I wondered if I (and my interest in ministry) would ever amount to anything. On top of that, in recent years my wife and I have had one wave of pain after another as we have dealt with health issues, tight finances and trying to be good parents in some very complicated and ongoing situations with our kids. I know many of you have faced pain, too, many much greater than mine, and like me

you have wondered at times whether the Lord has forgotten you, whether you'd missed His leading at some point and whether your points of pain would ever be relieved.

As we look at Psalm 13, I think you will see our own stories there, and we'll see how the psalm provides hope and encouragement for how to handle pain. So let's open this psalm together, starting with its background and structure.

I. Background

Psalm 13

A Psalm of David.

How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever?

How long will You hide Your face from me?

How long shall I take counsel in my soul,

Having sorrow in my heart all the day?

How long will my enemy be exalted over me? (Psalm 13:1-2 NASB)

First, we are told that this psalm was written by David. This is the same David who tended sheep as a boy (he was one of eight sons; even more than I have!); was anointed by Samuel to replace Saul as King of Israel; killed the giant, Goliath; was befriended by Jonathan, Saul's son; and was beloved by all Israel and Judah—for a while. For a while, things were going great—just like things with us can be very smooth for a while. But David became the object of Saul's jealousy and wrath, and was hunted like a criminal by Saul and his men. He wound up having to seek refuge outside Israel, and though he was ultimately crowned king over both Israel and Judah after Saul's death, David went on to suffer one trial after another.

What made him write this psalm? We aren't told. One possible context is a time when a raiding army plundered David's town and took his wives and the other women and children hostage, and the people blamed David and wanted to stone him. There are other possibilities, of course. Saul chased him for a long time trying to kill him, for example, and others tried to dethrone him. Whatever the case, we will see that David writes out of extreme and long-term pain.

As for the psalm itself, it has a simple, three-part structure that's common to lament psalms:

A Lament

B Petition

A' Confidence

It starts in verses 1-2 with David's lament ("lament" simply means "to cause God to remember me in my need"). As we'll see, lament psalms typically involve a tension between God's promises (for good), or the writer's perception of those promises, and the writer's experiences (which seemingly are not good; that is, they don't match up, and the writer is left feeling confused or worse). Then it moves to petition (asking God for help) in verses 3-4, and then to confidence in verses 5-6, where David expresses his trust in God. In a minute, we'll look at each part and what application the psalm has for us.

Two other general points of background: First, I think it's interesting that about 50 of the 150 psalms—one-third of the psalter—are lament psalms. Clearly, taking their woes to the Lord was something David and the other psalmists did a lot, and we'll see shortly how their laments are relevant to us, thousands of years later. Second, we'll see in this psalm some interesting aspects of Hebrew poetry that will help us as we read any psalm—like parallel lines where the second line amplifies the first—so I'll invite you to watch for those.

II. David's Lament (13:1-2)

Let's see what treasures we can unpack from the first stanza:

How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever?

**How long will You hide Your face from me?
How long shall I take counsel in my soul,
Having sorrow in my heart all the day?
How long will my enemy be exalted over me?**

“How long?” It’s repeated four times in two verses—that’s really unusual in Scripture. It shows enormous distress, a feeling of being completely abandoned by God. It also indicates that David had “often had asked God to deliver him, but his prayers had not been answered.”²

Also notice that three parties—You, I and enemy—get their turn to be the subject: How long will *You Lord* (forget me and hide Your face from me), how long will *I* (take counsel in my soul) and how long will *my enemy* (be exalted over me). This covers all the dimensions of life—spiritual (verse 1), internal (the first two lines of verse 2) and circumstantial (the last line of verse 2)—and expresses the totality of the writer’s distress. David is telling God every dimension of his despair.

He speaks to Yahweh, the personal God. Yahweh means “I AM,” the “all-sufficient One.” Do you see the tension? David takes his emptiness to the all-sufficient One, and says, “This all-sufficient thing isn’t working. Don’t you see how bad my situation is? Can’t you see that I have no idea what to do? How long will you let this go on?”

Earlier in the Old Testament, others vented “how long?” But up to now, it’s been mainly God and Joshua complaining about the Israelites:

“How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me?” (Ex. 10:3, NASB)

“How long will this people spurn Me?” (Num. 14:11, NASB)

“How long will you put off entering to take possession of the land?” (Josh. 18:3, NASB)

In Psalm 13, though, we have one of God’s own people complaining to God about Him! Job did this too, of course, but as we will see, David’s cries seem to open the door to many others to do likewise. We see it in many Psalms and in Jeremiah, among others. Author Jerry Sittser comments that God “wants us to strive with him, as He does with us,” and he doesn’t seem to mind if we are persistent about it.³

What does David lament? Three things:

**How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever?
How long will You hide Your face from me?**

First, in verse 1, he laments feeling separated from God, which seems totally wrong to him as God’s anointed king. We see this in the expressions “forget me forever” and “hide your face from me.” “Forget” does not mean God is absent-minded and forgets who David is or what his situation is. Rather, in the Hebrew *forget* is a deliberate act to neglect or ignore. And “forever” carries the connotation of completely. “Hide your face” (a parallel line) is a strong term indicating a relationship that is cut off. It amplifies the lament in verse 1 by painting a picture of God turning His back, closing His eyes to someone with whom He has a covenant. In Old Testament imagery, the ultimate blessing is to have the Lord’s face shine upon you, so when He turns and hides it the person naturally despairs. In other words, David feels like God is purposely ignoring him, which seems at odds with the Lord’s covenant with him.

Have you ever felt like that? That God is purposely being silent with you, or has even turned his face from you? I think we can easily feel that way, especially in the midst of long afflictions and especially when our prayers seem to go unanswered. Sittser tells of a couple who experienced losses that overwhelmed them. “What surprised and bewildered them most of all ... was God’s silence.” They felt that God did not answer their prayers; that “Heaven was strangely silent.”⁴

**How long shall I take counsel in my soul,
Having sorrow in my heart all the day?
How long will my enemy be exalted over me?**

Second, in verse 2, David’s lament becomes personal and inward—churning, lonely sorrow. “How long shall I take counsel in my soul?” he cries. It’s as though David forms plan after plan, but with no one outside himself, he cannot find way out of his mess. And he has “sorrow in [his] heart all the day”—an amplifying thought that shows the intensity and extent of David’s sorrow. The expression really means “sorrow all the time,” a prolonged state of grief, and carries the idea of feeling completely forsaken to the point where it even affects him physically, a foretaste of hell itself. David uses the same thought in Psalm 22: “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? ... I cry by day, but You do not answer, and by

night, but I have no rest” (Ps 22:1-2 NASB). Jesus experienced this same sorrow on the cross, and quoted Psalm 22 on that awful day.

Third, we see the third subject of David’s lament, namely, his enemy. David cries, “How long will my enemy be exalted over me?” This third line indicates an escalating lament, climaxing with his despair over his enemy. We aren’t told whether David’s enemy is a specific person like Saul (who at various times was trying to kill him), or his son Absalom (who with his army later tried to dethrone him), or someone else. It’s probably a reference to the collective physical forces who were against him, not just as a man but as God’s anointed king.

In the New Testament age, our enemies are rarely individuals. My co-worker that I find hard to work with is not my enemy. My rebellious child (not that I have any!) is not my enemy. The truck driver who cut me off and almost drove me into a tree is not my enemy (though it may feel that way). Rather, our real enemies are the world, the flesh and the devil. These try to destroy every dimension of our life—emotional, spiritual, relational and physical. The ways of the world entice us and can feel like they are controlling us. Our flesh takes us in entirely wrong directions if we are not careful. And always, the devil is lurking—eager to whisper a twisted word in our ear to get us off track and onto a hurtful path.

To sum up these first two verses, David has slid into a pretty depressed place. He feels alone and forgotten, getting no response from God when he cries to Him. He is tired of being shut up to his own thoughts for counsel and direction. And he is deeply distressed as his enemy continues to succeed, which also brings David’s reputation into question: Is he truly “God’s anointed?”

Maybe this resonates with you. Life can feel pretty bleak at times, and can feel like it will always be bleak. We pray from our pain, but we can all too easily slide into despair if our prayers go unanswered.⁵ Kids wonder if God is there in the dark. We adults wonder if God is there when our circumstances make life feel dark. We may know intellectually that God is there, but we feel forgotten.

III. David’s Petition (13:3-4 NASB)

David does not just complain and leave it at that. Let’s see where his lament takes him in the second stanza:

**Consider and answer me, O LORD my God;
Enlighten my eyes**

Here we see that David’s complaint leads him to petition the Lord. He asks “O Lord *my* God.” He asks not just Yahweh, the personal God, but he makes a point of calling him *his* personal God. The three things he asks, “consider” (also translated “look,” another reference to the matter of God’s face), “answer” and “enlighten,” present David’s petition in sequence. First, he believes that God has hidden His face from him, so he pleads, “look at me.” Feelings of divine abandonment had brought David despair, but God’s “look,” expressive of His favor, would renew his life. Second, David asks God to “answer” him. To answer would be a positive message of God’s favor by which the Lord would free David from the causes of his anguish of soul. Third, David asks to receive “light” for his eyes. This idiom means to revive: to restore strength and vigor. But the key word in David’s petition is actually the little word “lest” that he repeats:

**lest I sleep the sleep of death,
lest my enemy will say, “I have overcome him,”
and my adversaries will rejoice when I am shaken.**

David fears two things will happen if God does not intervene: First, that he will die (sleep the sleep of death), and second, that his enemies will prosper. In the first case, if the king dies, it affects not only him but the whole kingdom of God. It calls into question God’s relationship to the king, and the entire Davidic covenant is undermined. In the second case, David fears that his enemies will get the last word and say they’re stronger than he and God (and don’t need to worship Yahweh). I think this is one of our fears, too: that our faith in the Lord won’t prevail when life is really hard, that somehow God will not be seen as the Almighty, worthy of everyone’s worship. So like David, we can petition the Lord in prayer, “Oh God, show Your power! Do not let my enemies (the world, the flesh and the devil) say they have beaten me!”

One other observation on the Petition stanza: Like his Lament, David’s Petition speaks to all three dimensions: spiritual (he prays and asks), internal (he asks for inner restoration) and circumstantial (he asks for physical life and the defeat of his enemies). David is asking God to address every dimension of his despair, and we can do likewise.

For example, when I struggle with how to parent a teenager in a complex situation that is truly beyond me, I ask God to work in those three dimensions:

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spiritual (to draw me close to Himself and strengthen me spiritually), internal (to revive my discouraged heart) and circumstantial (to work in my child's heart to bring life and healing, not just for his sake (and my sanity) but so that no one can say "God wasn't big enough").

IV. David's Confession of Confidence (13:5-6 NASB)

David has given voice to his pain and has petitioned the Lord to act. Now something amazing happens, but it's not what some might expect. Verses 5-6:

**But I trust in Your loyal-love;
My heart rejoices in Your salvation.
I will sing to the LORD,
Because He has dealt bountifully with me.**

We don't get a quick changing of David's circumstance, as though God fixed everything for him. What we do get is an *abrupt move in David's heart anyway*—a move *from* lament and anxiety over all that matters to him, *to* confidence and confessing his trust in the Lord. "But I," for example, is emphatic, as is "in your loyal-love." He is saying that, though circumstances suggest otherwise, he will be confident in the Lord, even without promise of imminent rescue. Notice, too, the progression of the verbs outward—trust, then rejoice, then sing—and how God's solution addresses the three dimensions we saw before. David first "trusts" in the Lord's loyal love: there is spiritual transformation (the first dimension). God's hidden face in the first stanza (verses 1-2) is now replaced by David's renewed awareness of His "loyal-love" (the Hebrew word *hesed*, sometimes translated lovingkindness or unfailing love) which describes God's faithful commitment to His people and which is the cornerstone for David's move to confidence.

Second, David's heart then "rejoices" in God's salvation (literally "shouts as in triumph"). This is the same word we saw in verse 4 when David feared his adversaries would rejoice. That's the internal transformation (the second dimension). What was sorrow in the first stanza is now joy in this third stanza. And third, David says he will "sing" because God has dealt bountifully with him. Here's the circumstantial transformation (the third dimension), but it's not the situation with the enemy that's changed, *just David's outlook* as he remembers all that the Lord has done (and will do) for him.

So the three-fold descent into depression we saw earlier is now matched by a three-fold ascent from the pit: trust, rejoice, sing! And "dealt bountifully" in the last line means to "make full provision." The basic idea is completeness—completely provided for, in contrast to feeling completely forgotten in verses 1-2. Here it describes David's confidence that God will repay his king with such goodness that it will more than repay him for his present suffering.

So David is reminded of God's goodness. His focus is no longer on his enemy but on God's total sufficiency. This often happens in Psalms. When the poet gives voice to his lament and petition, he finds renewed clarity of confidence in Lord. One commentator writes, "What is the secret of this surprising change? Have his troubles ceased? Not at all. But that which made their worst bitterness is gone—his doubt of God's goodness and truth. In the very act of prayer, his mind is led out of himself, and faith [is] rekindled."⁶ Likewise, telling God our lament and our petition in our distress can lead to renewed clarity of confidence in Him. I experienced that when I wrote a lament psalm of my own earlier this year, which I'll share in a few minutes. I know some of you have experienced this, too. One PBC couple I know has more than once gone on trail walks, yelling at God in their agony over ongoing, unresolved issues with a family member's health and a grown child's choices. Each time, they have felt a renewed peace and sense of His presence afterward.

Notice two other things about this Confidence stanza: First, notice the "I ... you" couplets in all four lines. I think this suggests a renewed closeness between David and the Lord. But notice that the fourth line reverses the order: the poet leads with He, not I. I think this emphasizes that the source of all David's trusting, rejoicing and singing is the Lord Himself and His loyal love. And that is the same loyal love that He has toward us. It reminds me of verses like Romans 5:8: "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (NASB), and Philippians 1:6: "He who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it" (paraphrase). Second, while some have said that part of a pastor's job is to help us hear God's voice, especially when we ache for it, what we seem to see in Psalm 13 is that God's voice (and renewed clarity for us) sometimes comes *only after we give Him our voice!* What first shapes David's voice here is not praise but pain, not joy but grief.

V. Conclusion and Relevance for Today

So in sum, verse 6 is the answer to the question in verse 1. "How long?" becomes "I will sing." Despair is turned to thankfulness. David's prayer of anguish becomes a song of praise *because he knows God will care for him*. In other words, the answer to "how long?" is, "it doesn't matter how long because the Lord *will* care for me forever." That renewed awareness can transform our crises of despair into songs of appreciation for what He *has* done (and what He *will* do). As Brian Morgan has commented, "The mere act of spending our grief in full measure before the Lord can sometimes take us to that mysterious place where we taste the sweetness of the future while still in the painful present."⁷

Do you long for a deeper sense of that in your life? I do. Have you kept God at arm's length and never let Him in? Maybe it's time you let Him in. Have you been carrying pain for a long time, unexpressed pain? Maybe it's time to tell God how badly you hurt and to ask Him for His provision. And for those of you who have not yet had to go down the road of longstanding affliction, do you know others who are there now? Maybe God is calling you to be a sympathetic support to them.

Finally, the last part of this Psalm is actually not verse 6, it is the postscript, the reference to the choir director. We said earlier it is important to know a psalm's author and context; this postscript is also important. At the end of the psalm, David essentially hands it to the director of music and tells him it is now to be sung by God's covenant people, allowing David's voice to become the voice of God's people! So Psalm 13 is not just David's lament, petition and confession of confidence. We can use it, too, as a vehicle to express our own laments to God.

Where else do we do see these things, especially in the New Testament and in our own day? Here I must admit that, though Bruce Waltke and others see this as I do, some see this differently. They see less of a place for New Testament believers to voice lament to God. So I invite you to study this issue on your own and reach your own conclusions. Here's my view:

David's lament is picked up not only by others in the Old Testament, but by Jesus in the New Testament, where He found Himself in even worse situations: beset by enemies, abandoned by friends, and even experiencing the ultimate humiliation of a public crucifixion. We see Jesus giving voice to His lament in the Garden of Gethsemane, when He brings His agony to the Lord in prayer, and ultimately on the cross when He cries, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46, NASB).

We also see where Paul exhorts the Ephesians (and us by extension) to continue to use the psalms: "Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord" (Eph 5:18-19 NASB).

It's of course true that the New Testament church is often encouraged to expect trials, and to ask for wisdom to handle them (see the books of James and 1 Peter, for example). We're exhorted to fix our eyes not on our circumstances but on Christ.

But here is the point: sometimes our circumstances are so painful and so long-lasting that, while we're asking (or even begging) God for wisdom and seeking His face, we feel only silence, we feel forgotten, that our situation is way too big for us. I think that's when lament—taking our frustration to God—is the best door to getting re-oriented on Christ and back on the path to praising Him. The act of lamenting helps us remember, like Peter did, that *Christ alone* has the words of eternal life, and like Paul wrote to the Philippians, that God is committed to making us fully like Christ.

Lament psalms like Psalm 13 help us stay grounded. As Jerry Sittser describes:

Every home needs a grounding wire to keep it safe during an electrical storm. However powerful the strike of lightning, it will inflict no damage if a home has such a wire, for that wire will send the electrical charge directly into the ground, where it can do no damage. The Psalms are like grounding wire for emotional lightning bolts. The Psalms invite us to complain, ... to accuse God, all in the form ... of prayer. The Psalms assume that God is big enough, powerful enough and gracious enough to absorb that emotion so that it causes no destruction. ... God can take our complaints. He even welcomes our complaints. He tells us to express our frustration directly to Him, even when it involves what appears to be His own failure.⁸

So what is your reaction to this Psalm and to what we covered today? Is there ongoing pain in your life—something hard and confusing, where you feel God

is not upholding His promises to you as His child? Is there something that has troubled you deep within for a long time but that you have perhaps not given much voice to? As I reflect on Psalm 13, I see these four things:

First, it's all right (and maybe even mandatory!) to tell God you feel forgotten and hurt, and to tell Him every dimension of your hurt. Second, feel free to ask Him to act, not just for your sake but for His Name's sake. Third, look to Him for your confidence in every dimension. You can rest in His loyal-love even without immediate deliverance from your enemies. And fourth, enjoy the surprise of how your spirit can lift, how you can get new clarity into God's person and presence as your confidence—maybe even write a lament psalm of your own to chronicle what has happened. The bottom line is that giving God our laments and petitions can lead, even without changed circumstances, to new or renewed confidence in Him.

I have never been much of a writer. In fact, one of my high school English teachers once ridiculed my writing in front of the whole class. So I have carefully avoided all of the exhortations from a certain pastor of ours to write something, until this past winter when one of our intern class assignments was to write a psalm. I did the assignment, and wrote a lament psalm that I'd like to share with you in abridged form. It's about my adult years and the ongoing tension I've felt between God's promises to bless me and use me on the one hand, and my experience of not having work to do that felt like it was God's design for me on the other hand. The psalm references parts of my story that I mentioned earlier. It also traces my in-home visits over a six-year period to a 90+ year-old great woman of the faith through our deacon program. You'll recognize this as a lament psalm, with some parallel lines, petitions, confidence and even some thanksgiving for His goodness. And like David, you'll hear how I was re-oriented to confidence and praise.

O Lord, will I ever have a place?

Will my soul ever know the joy of fulfilling Your design?
My soul has no voice
My heart has no fountain to pour forth Your wonders.

You have promised me life,
The oil of joy
But I know only a lingering thirst,
The ache of an empty pitcher.

O God, help me find Your path for me
Guide me to Your place

Seven olive plants [our kids] grow around our table
"There's your ministry," I am told
I serve them and try to lead, yet years go by and the pitcher stands empty
O Lord, will I ever have a place?

Have I missed a sign, O Lord?
Been too passive in following after You?
Has my weakness kept me from Your plan?
Will I enter heaven with only this sadness, carrying an empty pitcher?

You are my confidence, O God, my all-sufficient One
Fill me to overflowing
Let me praise You not just with sadness but with joy
With oil beyond all measure.

A new deacon ministry brings a postcard
At last, this must tell me of my place!
But I can't fix pipes, repair fences or help with computers.
Wait – visiting shut-ins I can do!

You, O Lord, were her confidence for 93 years, then You invited us to tea
After 6 years of Thursdays and 300 cups of tea, she passed into Your presence
As her life had begun, now her death started anew to fill my pitcher
Her service of remembrance introduced me to a place

Hosting Sunday services gave my spirit wings
Serving men's retreats and hymn sings lifted me high
My soul knows new joy, the pitcher is filling
Yet still quietly wonders about my future place

A car ride with a teenage son whose trust I somehow have lost
His direct questions of my heart I could not dodge
"An intern program? Why don't you look into it?"
His penetrating suggestion I could not ignore

You, O Lord, opened the gates
You, my oil-giver, gave me welcome to gatekeepers
You, O Lord, give me delight in my soul of souls
You, my fountain-maker, feed my soul with Your place for me.

You have promised me life,
The oil of joy
Now I know much more than a lingering thirst,
Now my pitcher overflows.

O Lord, You have given me a place
My soul feels the joy of fulfilling Your design
And I will praise You
Yes, I will sing praises to You among the people.

God is good. But He does not promise us a life without pain. I have spent a lot of years carrying pain, yet in my laments I have found renewed confidence in the Lord. Right now, life seems so much more right. But like so many of you, that's not the end of the story. Pain and difficulties often come in waves. After one recedes, a new wave comes, sometimes unexpectedly and larger than we think we can handle.

In my case, there is at least one more psalm still to be written, a lament that I have no words for yet, just groaning. I've been living with a totally unexpected and difficult situation for the last three years, trying to be a husband and father with a family member who has an undiagnosed illness that hinders him and affects our whole family almost every day. I honestly don't know how to handle it. I wish I had the instruction manual. I wish I had more light for the path that is lit dimly, and sometimes seems not lit at all. But I know now, more than ever, that I can tell God my pain, and in doing so can find confidence in Him, even before the pain is gone.

As Isaiah says of the Lord, "I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water." (Is. 41:18, KJV)

**What shall I return to the Lord for all His goodness to me?
I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord.
(Ps 116:12-13 TNIV)**

Thanks be to the Lord!

1 Bernard Bell, "The Gift of Pain," a sermon delivered at Peninsula Bible Church Cupertino, Cupertino, CA, February 8, 2009.

2 R.G. Bratcher & W.D. Reburn, *A Translator's Handbook on the Book of Psalms, Helps for Translators* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1991), 60.

3 Jerry Sittser, *When God Doesn't Answer Your Prayer* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 98.

4 Sittser, *When God Doesn't Answer Your Prayer*, 31.

5 Sittser, *When God Doesn't Answer Your Prayer*, 44.

6 *The Pulpit Commentary: Psalms Vol. I. 2004* (H. D. M. Spence-Jones, Ed.) (82). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

7 Brian Morgan, *Climbing with the Psalms, Give Me an Authentic Voice*, (Cupertino: Peninsula Bible Church Cupertino, 2009), 21.

8 Sittser, *When God Doesn't Answer Your Prayer*, 76-77.

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