

Psalm 13

"Out of the Pit"

October 15, 2023

1. Intro

- a. In the year 1505, a twenty-two-year-old man in Germany was walking home from law school on the road to Stotternheim
 - i. While he was on the road, a tremendous thunderstorm came upon him, and he was thrown to the ground in terror
 1. As he lay on the ground in the midst of the storm, the young man cried out to one of the patron saints of his family, "Saint Ann, help me! I will become a monk!!"
 2. A few weeks later, Martin Luther would leave law school, sell all his possessions, and enter into the monastery in Erfurt, where he would become a monk in the Augustinian order
 - ii. To understand Martin Luther, we need to know the context in which he was raised
 1. The predominant form of preaching as he was growing up was a continual preaching of hell and condemnation
 - a. In the words of one writer, the preaching of those days "placed a heavy burden of guilt on the hearer, but never lifted this burden with the grace of the Gospel"
 - i. The only way that the wrath of God could be appeased, was by striving to live a holy life
 - ii. And, aside from being the Pope or a part of the clergy of the church, becoming a monk was one of the greatest ways to earn more grace from God
 - b. So Luther not only became a monk – he decided that he would be the best monk there was
 - i. One of the great quotes he said as he looked back on those days was, "I was a good monk, and I kept the rule of my order so strictly that I may say that if ever a monk got to heaven by his monkery, it was I"
 2. But Luther's dedication led to growing problem
 - a. As he strove to become a truly holy man, he began to look deep within his heart
 - i. And the deeper he went into his own heart, the more sin he discovered there
 - ii. One of the practices in the monastery was that the monks had to go to confession every day in order to receive forgiveness for their sins
 1. Luther's confession times grew longer and longer, until finally the man who listened to his confessions said to him, "Go away until you have committed a serious sin worth confessing!"
 3. Martin Luther's heart was in turmoil
 - a. He fasted so much that his fellow monks thought he would die
 - b. He confessed so much sin that his confessor wouldn't even listen to him anymore
 - c. He deprived himself of virtually anything that might give him even the slightest amount of pleasure
 - i. And in all of these things, Luther was unable to find his way to God
 4. It is at this point in his story that we will turn to Psalm 13
 - iii. No one knows when David wrote this Psalm, or what the circumstances surrounding him were
 1. Spurgeon writes in his commentary,
 - a. "The Psalm cannot be referred to any special event or period in David's history. All attempts to find it a birthplace are but guesses. It was, doubtless, more than once the language of that much-tried man of God, and is intended to express the feelings of the people of God in those ever-returning trials which beset them."
 - i. We'll look at this Psalm in three parts this morning...

2. The first part is, THE QUESTION

- a. How long?

- i. Psalm 13:1-2
 - 1. ¹How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?
 - 2. ²How 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?
- b. Four times, David asks of God, “How long?”
 - i. How long, O Lord, will you forget me forever?
 - ii. How long will you hide your face from me?
 - iii. How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day?
 - iv. How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?
- c. Much like Martin Luther would be many hundreds of years later, David’s heart was in turmoil
 - i. Maybe, this is where YOU find yourself today?
 - 1. Maybe, like Luther, you’ve been striving to live a holy life
 - a. You’ve done all the right things
 - i. You’re here in church today
 - ii. You’ve been faithful in giving and serving
 - iii. You’ve been consistent in reading your Bible
 - b. Yet God seems far away... distant... silent
 - 2. And the cry of your heart deep down is the same cry as David in this Psalm, “How long, O Lord”
 - ii. One of the things I love about the Psalms is that they paint a picture of what the human heart is TRULY like
 - 1. So many of our modern worship songs are about the joy of the believer, and the victory of the believer, and the power God gives to the believer
 - a. There’s nothing wrong with singing about these mountaintop experiences
 - i. But the reality is that, for most of us, we don’t live every day on the mountaintops
 - 1. The majority of our days are spent in the mundane, and the routine, and the unexciting
 - 2. And, if we’re honest, many of our days are spent in the valleys
 - a. Days where we feel as if the Lord’s face has been hidden from us
 - iii. And the Psalms unashamedly reflect this reality...
 - 1. In Psalm 6:2-3, David writes,
 - a. ²Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing; heal me, O LORD, for my bones are troubled. ³My soul also is greatly troubled. But you, O LORD—how long?
 - 2. In Psalm 79: 4-5, Asaph laments,
 - a. ⁴We have become a taunt to our neighbors, mocked and derided by those around us. ⁵How long, O LORD? Will you be angry forever?
 - 3. And in Psalm 89:46-47, we read these words from a man named Ethan the Ezrahite,
 - a. ⁴⁶How long, O LORD? Will you hide yourself forever? How long will your wrath burn like fire? ⁴⁷Remember how short my time is! For what vanity you have created all the children of man!
 - d. The Psalms don’t sugarcoat the reality of life, do they?
 - i. Martin Luther was walking through one of the deepest valleys of his life, as he faced the depth of his own depravity, and he realized that his works could never appease the wrath of a JUST God
 - 1. But then, in 1513, eight years after he had become a monk, Luther began teaching on the Psalms
 - a. And in Psalm 22, another of David’s Psalms of deep lament, Luther read these words in verses 1-2,
 - i. ¹My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? ²O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.
 - b. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

2. "O Lord my God, brighten my eyes and grant me a little reviving in my darkness!"
- vi. In Luke's Gospel, we get a unique insight into why this prayer is so very important for us as Christians
 1. In Luke 22:39-46, we read the familiar account of Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, as he pleads with His Father to remove the cup of His wrath that he was about to face
 - a. But in verse 45, we find Luke's unique addition to this story
 - i. He writes that, after Jesus rose from prayer, *"he came to the disciples and found them sleeping... FOR SORROW"*
 1. This word that Luke uses for "sorrow" is one that means a deep, emotional pain; a heavy grief that brings a person down
 - ii. When his disciples should have been praying alongside of Jesus, they instead became overwhelmed in their grief... and they fell asleep
 2. We've all been there, haven't we?
 - a. When the darkness and the loneliness of the valley becomes so overwhelming that we can no longer handle the burdens of our day, so we crawl into bed and try to sleep away our problems
 - i. Let's be careful here – sometimes that is EXACTLY what we need to do
 1. Sometimes it can be a GOOD thing to go to bed and allow your body and your mind and your heart to get some much-needed rest
 - b. But there are also times when that is NOT the answer
 - i. There are times when sleep becomes an escape, rather than a solution
 - ii. And in those times, we need to heed the words of Jesus to his disciples in verse 46, "Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation."
 - vii. Rise and pray, that you may not give in to your despair
 - viii. Rise and pray, that you may not seek some form of escape that might lead you into sin
 - ix. Rise and pray, that the Lord would light up your eyes, and grant you a little reviving in your darkness
 1. This was what Martin Luther did, as he was faced with his growing realization that he was utterly incapable of ridding himself of his sin
 2. This was what Luther did, as he wondered upon the mystery that Christ was absolutely free from sin, yet he received the full wrath of the Father upon the cross
 3. This was what Luther did, as he wrestled with how a man could ever live up to the righteousness of God
 - a. In his own words, Luther mediated day and night upon the Scriptures, praying that God would "light up his eyes" to their meaning
 - i. Luther's eyes were being opened as he asked the question, "How long, O Lord?"
 - ii. His eyes were being opened as he plead with the Lord, "light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death"
 - iii. And he would find his answer, just as David did in the last two verses of Psalm 13
 4. We've looked at the question, we've looked at the plea, we'll conclude by looking at the third part of this Psalm,

4. The ANSWER

- a. In Psalm 13:5-6, David writes,
 - i. *⁵But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. ⁶I will sing to the LORD, because he has dealt bountifully with me.*
- b. These are an incredible two verses, aren't they??
 - i. Talk about a HUGE shift in emotions!
 1. This short Psalm opens with David in the pit of despair, filled with sorrow and grief and anguish
 - a. And now, just a few short verses later, David is REJOICING and SINGING?!

2. What is the reason for this sudden and complete shift?
 - a. David realized that the answer to his question, “How long, O Lord?” was found in the very character of God Himself!
 - ii. Even though the circumstances David was facing led him to think that the Lord had forgotten him, and hidden His face from him, and caused him to have sorrow in his heart all day long, he was able to say,
 1. “I trust in your STEADFAST love”
 - a. How could a God of STEADFAST love EVER forget His children?
 - b. How could a God of STEADFAST love EVER hide His face from those He loves?
 - c. How could a God of STEADFAST love EVER leave His beloved ones to deal with their grief and their sorrow all by themselves?
 2. David realized that such a thing would be utterly inconsistent with who God is!
 - a. So he trusted in the steadfast love of the Lord!
 - iii. My friends, as we face our valleys in this life, this must be our trust as well
 1. We don’t trust in how good or bad our circumstances are
 2. We don’t trust in how full or empty our bank account is
 3. We don’t trust in politicians, or the economy, or the stability of the nations of the world
 - a. We trust in the steadfast love of the Lord!
 - iv. As the writer of Psalm 118 says in verses 1-4.
 1. *¹Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever! ²Let Israel say, “His steadfast love endures forever.” ³Let the house of Aaron say, “His steadfast love endures forever.” ⁴Let those who fear the LORD say, “His steadfast love endures forever.”*
- c. So David trusted in the steadfast love of the Lord
- i. And he rejoiced in his salvation
 1. For David, this salvation is a little different than the salvation we know today
 - a. Obviously, Christ had not yet come
 - b. The sacrificial system of bulls and goats was still very much in place
 2. So what did David mean when he said, “My heart shall rejoice in your salvation”?
 - a. Ultimately, even though he knew nothing of Jesus, nor of God’s eternal plan to reconcile lost sinners to Himself through the death of His Son, David’s salvation was rooted in the same foundation as ours
 - i. FAITH in the promises of God!
 1. David, and all the other Old Testament saints were not saved by their good works
 - a. They were saved by their faith in what was to come!
 3. This is the whole point of Hebrews chapter 11, that fantastic chapter that recounts for us the faith of Abraham and Moses and Gideon and Samson and David and others
 - a. As verses 1 and 2 say,
 - i. ¹Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ²For by it the people of old received their commendation.
 4. David had faith in the promises of God
 - a. And therefore, David was able to rejoice in his salvation, even in the midst of his darkest valleys
 - i. And the writer of Hebrews goes on to say that, if David and the other Old Testament saints could have such faith in things they would never see, how much better is the faith that WE now know in Jesus Christ?!
 - ii. This was Martin Luther’s great realization as he wrestled with the Scriptures and prayed that God would bring light to his eyes
 1. He realized his inability to cleanse himself from his own sin
 2. He realized that Christ, the sinless Son of God, went to the cross on HIS behalf
 3. And he realized that it is only BY FAITH that ANYONE can EVER be saved
 - a. The Gospel is not, “Do your best so you can live up to the righteousness of God”

- b. The Gospel is, “Your best will NEVER be good enough, so simply have faith in the promises of God, realized through His Son, Jesus Christ, and you will be saved!”
 - 4. When Martin Luther finally began to see these truths for himself, he wrote,
 - a. “Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates.”
 - b. In the midst of his despair over his own depravity, Luther rejoiced in the salvation that comes through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ
 - d. My friend, have you come to see for yourself this amazing promise in the Scriptures
 - i. Do you understand that you are so deeply in slavery to your own sin, that you have no hope whatsoever of being found righteous before our Holy God?
 - ii. Do you understand that, because you can never be good enough to stand before God, the only expectation you have before you is His wrath and judgment?
 - iii. Do you understand that your ONLY hope to EVER be declared righteous before God Almighty is by placing your faith in His Son, Jesus Christ?
 - 1. And that, even then, it will not be your righteousness that saves you, but the righteousness given to you by Christ, through the GRACE of the Father?
 - a. If you have not come to an understanding of the TRUE Gospel, I pray that the Lord would bring light to your eyes this morning
 - b. I pray that your heart would be awakened to the reality that it is only by grace, through faith in Christ, that you are saved
 - i. And I pray that that faith will be given to you, on this day!
 - e. But for those of us who have placed our faith in Christ, for those of us who have been saved by the grace of our Father
 - i. I pray that you would REJOICE in your salvation today
 - 1. Just take a moment and think about all that Christ has done for you
 - a. You were once enemies of God, but now, through Christ, you have been given peace with your Father
 - b. You were once children of wrath, but now, through Christ, you are children of God
 - c. You were once dead in your transgressions, but now, through Christ, you are alive in him
 - d. You were once clothed in filthy rags, but now, through Christ, you are robed in the very righteousness of God
 - 2. This is how we remain unshaken in our faith, my friends
 - a. By remembering all that Christ has done for us, and by remembering that there is NOTHING that can ever take us out of his grasp
 - f. Even as we walk the dark valleys of this life, like David, we can sing to the Lord, because he has dealt BOUNTIFULLY with me
 - 5. In the year 1517, another monk would come to the area where Martin Luther lived
 - a. This monk, named Johann Tetzel, was on a mission – but it was far from a godly mission
 - i. He had come into town to sell indulgences to the people
 - 1. The belief was that, if the people would buy these indulgences – basically just little slips of paper – then it would earn graces for their loved ones who had died, and they might be released from Purgatory and allowed to go to heaven
 - a. In reality, this was simply a cunning fundraising tactic the clergy had come up with to build the massive cathedral in Rome, St. Peter’s Basilica
 - b. Martin Luther, whose eyes had just been enlightened to the grace of God, and the biblical truth that we are not saved by our works (including indulgences), but through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone, could not remain silent
 - i. So, on October 31st, in the year 1517, Luther would write out his 95 Theses, and nail them to the door of the church in Wittenburg, Germany
 - 1. He had no desire to start a whole new church
 - 2. He had no desire to become an enemy of the Pope

3. He simply wanted to start a conversation with the leaders of the church, to steer them away from all of these efforts to try to win God's favor, and instead point them toward the amazing grace of God
- ii. He had no idea that his writings would become one of the many sparks that would light the fires of the Protestant Reformation
 1. My friends, I want you to think deeply about these things
 2. There are many in the church today that say that it is time we "move on" from the truths that were rediscovered during the Reformation
 - a. They say that doctrine divides, and theology is only something that causes arguments
 - i. But WHAT IF the Reformation hadn't happened?
 - ii. WHAT IF Martin Luther, and others, hadn't been awakened to the reality of the grace of God
 1. We would likely still be trying to earn our way into God's favor, wouldn't we?
 - iii. We wouldn't be able to gather here today and say, with David, "But I have trusted in YOUR steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in YOUR salvation..."
 - iv. We wouldn't be able to say, "I will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with me."
 1. We can say these things, and we can sing about these things, because OUR eyes have been enlightened to these truths:
 - a. We have been saved by the grace of God, ALONE
 - b. Through faith, ALONE
 - c. In Jesus Christ, ALONE
 - d. For the glory of God, ALONE
 - e. And we rest in these truths, because our authority comes not from the church and all of our manmade traditions, but from the Word of God, ALONE
- c. May we sing to the Lord this morning, and every morning, for He has indeed dealt bountifully with us!!