

Genesis 18:20-32  
Abraham prays boldly for  
deliverance of Lot in Sodom

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Psalm 13  
David prays boldly: How long?

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Luke 11:1-13  
Jesus teaches his disc.  
to pray.

How long! How much longer!?! I can't tell you how many times I heard that question last week at Rocky Mountain Christian Camp. Over 160 Christian kids huddled into one campground and that's the question they ask—"How long until we eat? I'm starving. How long will we have to sit under this canopy to dodge the rain? I'm bored. Or when we were hiking MT Elbert, "how long until we get to the top? It seems like it never ends!" and I'm sure you've never heard that before from you own children—"Dad, are we there yet, how much longer?" That's a question that children can't help but ask—How long!?! That's the question God's children at times can't help but ask—"how long, O Lord?"

#### I. Asking your Father for what you need

In David's bold prayer which is Psalm 13, he asks that question four times in a psalm that's only 6 verses long. In these past few weeks we've gotten to know David pretty well just by taking a look at some of the psalms he's written. What was going on in David's life that made him ask, "How long, O Lord?"

#### **"How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?"**

Maybe he's thinking "God, why aren't you helping me right now!?! You chose me to be king of Israel, and now I'm running for my life from King Saul. How long will this go on? God, it doesn't even seem like you're paying attention to me"

Or maybe it was something David had done, and he felt as if God was saying, "Forget about you, you're not worth it." You remember that not so little incident with Bathsheba where lust and coveting snowballed into adultery and murder and so God had every reason to hide his face from David. Is that why David cried out, **"How long, O Lord? ...How long must I wrestle with my thoughts?"** Literally—David was saying, How long will I put deliberation or anxiety on my soul? All the things that burdened David—being attack by enemies; secret sins we don't even know about; the loss of one son and the betrayal by another son—how long will I have to keep these things bottled up inside?

**"How long, O Lord? ...How long will my enemies triumph over me?"** How much longer will evil seem to have the upper hand in this world? How much longer will I have to live in fear of those who want to take my throne and my life?

How Long, O Lord? What happens in your life that makes you ask that same question to God? "How long, O Lord? ...how much longer do I have to wait for an answer to all my prayers? How much longer will I have to lie here in this hospital bed... have you forgotten about me? Are you even paying attention?" Or perhaps its shame that has you wondering "How long, O Lord ...will I have to suffer humility for that stupid mistake?" Maybe it's the guilt of a sin or temptation that no one else knows about that has you crying out "How long will I wrestle with this? How long will I have to keep this bottled up inside?" Is it a broken relationship or friendship that has you boldly asking God, "How long do I have to have this sorrow, this pain in my heart?" Or maybe it's this: you take a close look at the world, and you see evil and violence and unbelief barreling out of control (at least it seems that way) and you just wonder like David did, "How long will all the enemies in this world seem to have the victory? How long O Lord?"

How long? That's annoying enough when a child asks his parents, "How long? When will we be there?" But David asks **God**, "How long?" What was he thinking?! It almost sounds like he's saying, God, you should be helping me, but you're not! It sounds like David is just complaining... And how often does it sound like we're just complaining? How often do we not even make as far as David did and all we're doing is complaining. Even if it is in passing though—"it's not fair! I deserve better!"

But David doesn't stop there. "**Look on me and answer me, O Lord my God. Give light to my eyes or I will sleep in death.**" No "please," no wishy-washy "maybe God if you could..." He's right to the point—"Look on me... answer me... give me!" That's bold. I guess the fact that we pray to God in the first place seems bold; we're sinners approaching a holy God. Abraham recognized that in his prayer, he says, "**Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord...**" There doesn't seem to be any reason that God should entertain a single word that we speak to him. Yet here's David asking for what he needs. David is praying boldly.

Are we so bold to pray as David did? Not always... Maybe there are times when you just feel that God won't listen to you because you haven't given him any good reason to, so shame keeps us from boldly going to God in prayer. Or other times perhaps we just don't boldly go to God in prayer because we think, "this problem is too big for me to handle. I can fix it, or at least I can wait it out and wait for things to blow over." And finally, there are just times in life when God isn't the first one I turn to because he's not number one in my life. Are we so bold to go to God asking him for what we need? Maybe the question should be, "How can I be so bold?"

Look how David addresses God, "O Lord my God—*MY* God." Remember how Jesus said we should address God in prayer—"our Father." Think of that every time you pray the Lord's Prayer, the very first words you say, "*our* Father—*my* Father..." It's like a little boy or a little girl running up to dad for whatever they need (scraped knee, scared at night), even if it's with tears in their eyes and distress in their voice, what father wouldn't reach out to meet the need of that little child? God, your Father gives you what you need the most—a Savior who was so bold. Jesus boldly prayed to God the Father and prayed that his will be done and God's will was that he die on the cross for you! So boldly Jesus carried his cross to that little hill outside of Jerusalem and let himself be nailed to the cross along with every single sin. Because he did that, you have that face to face/heart to heart access to God. So go ahead, be bold. Whatever you need—whatever it is, whatever you need... Be bold; ask the one who gives so generously he even gave you his Son. Ask your Father.

## II. Rejoicing in what you receive

Children learn from a pretty young age to ask Dad, or ask mom for what they need. They ask because they know that they receive good things from their parents. That's the point that Jesus makes in the gospel lesson (Luke 11:1-13)—"if you earthly fathers know how to give what is good, how much more does your Father in heaven?" David knows what he's receive from *his* God, *his* Father, so he rejoices!

"**BUT I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation.**" Think of all that a small child receives without even asking. A baby doesn't ask for food he's simply fed. A little toddler doesn't have to ask for new clothes, her parents dress her and provide for her. It's as simple as that. Look at all the blessings we receive from God our Father without even asking.

You think of David and all the blessings he received. He wasn't always running from enemies. David did have rest from his enemies. There was a time when David wasn't hiding out and living in caves. For much of his life he got to live in the lap of luxury in his palace. Not everyone was conspiring against him; he had friends who had his back. He had everything he needed and more. So David had every reason to rejoice in those blessings. But ultimately that's not why David ends this prayer trusting and rejoicing... He trusts in the unfailing love only *his* God shows. He rejoices in the salvation that his God has given him—every sin cleared from his account, removing the fear of eternal death—that's God's Salvation. That's what David received from God his Father. That's what has him rejoicing.

Look at what you've received from God. Without saying a single prayer, without a single helpless plea, he gave you full and free salvation. Chances are you didn't ask your mom and dad to take you to the baptismal font when you were just a few days old to have all your sins washed away. One day you didn't just say out of the blue, "you know what, I need to find Jesus"—he found you. God came to you and traded his perfect Son for you

and all you sin so that he could call you his son, his daughter. That's unfailing love. Without you lifting even a finger, God said "I'm going to nail my only Son to a cross and leave him there so that you never have to suffer eternal death. That's God's Salvation. That's your every reason to boldly go to God in prayer rejoicing.

God is good! Isn't he?! David sings that in his final verse: **"I will sing to the Lord for he has been good to me."** David literally says, I will sing to the Lord for he has accomplished [his purpose] for me. When you accomplish something big, you might even feel like singing, or at least doing something to celebrate. All those kids I was telling you about who were asking how long till we reach top of Mount Elbert (I was asking the same question too by the way). You know what each one of them did when they reached the top? In some way they showed a sign of relief and accomplishment—maybe even a fist pump the air and an "oh yeah!" And there people at the top of this 14,000' mountain cheering them on... "I will sing to the Lord for he has accomplished his purpose for me." God has accomplished his purpose for each one of us and there couldn't be anything more exciting. His purpose for each one of us is salvation—that you belong to him and live with him forever. That's a done deal. But even now God says, your life has a purpose, it has meaning. You get to live as God's child trusting in his unfailing love. You get to live everyday rejoicing in all that you receive from God. You get the spend eternity boldly singing praise to God your Father. Amen

In Christ,  
Justin Gran