
BEREAN DIGEST

STUDY. PRACTICE. TEACH.

Volume 7, Issue 5

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May 2020

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How Long, O Lord? Hope for the Hopeless



The Text

- 1** How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?
- 2** How 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?
- 3** Consider and answer me, O Lord my God;
light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death,
- 4** lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed over him,"
lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken.
- 5** But I have trusted in your steadfast love;
my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.
- 6** I will sing to the Lord,
because he has dealt bountifully with me.

Introduction

Life can be like a sea. You're sailing along on the peaceful sea and everything is calm. Then *all of a sudden* – seemingly out of nowhere – a storm arises. You're left asking yourself – where did this storm come from and how will we be able to overcome it. During this particular time in life, many individuals are facing difficult circumstances – situations that many have never faced before. Many are losing their health – losing their jobs – losing family members – and obviously losing their own lives.

Adding on to these new present circumstances, life was already difficult for many before the present pandemic arrived. Many were already sick – many were already struggling in many facets of life.

So even before these present circumstances – many were asking "How Long?" – how long is this going to last? The psalmist asked this exact question to God. This psalm is a lament. In the duration of this issue, we will take a look at the idea of lament – especially as expressed in the Psalms.

In lament the psalmist brings his hurt and pain to God by expressing himself in controlled and structured speech.

The Structure of Lament

Some have divided lament into five parts – namely, address, complaint, request, motivation, and confidence. Psalm 13 (also see Psalm 54) is typically used as the basis for standard lament structure.

Address –

How long, O Lord?

Lamenting to God begins with crying out to God – the only one who can truly help.

Complaint –

Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How 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?

The lamenter expresses to God his problems and troubles he is experiencing. By asking “How Long?” – the psalmist believes it has already been too long.

Request –

Consider and answer me, O Lord my God; light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death,

The lamenter asks God to respond to him and respond to his plight.

Motivation –

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. But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord,

The lamenter tells God why he should act or respond to his request. Basically, why God should get involved.

Confidence in God and Praise to God –

I will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with me.

In the end, the lamenter expresses his faith and confidence in God and offers praise to Him.

There are many sicknesses that individuals are suffering from and for many – they will have to deal with these physical afflictions for the duration of their lives. **Acute pain** can be mild and last just a moment, or it might be severe and last for weeks or months. **Chronic pain** is pain that is ongoing and usually lasts longer than six months.

Note these different life changing and impactful ailments include – Rheumatoid Arthritis, Lymphoma, Leukemia, Cervical Cancer, Colorectal Cancer, Breast Cancer, Brain Tumors, Dementia, Alzheimer, Crohn's Disease, Heart Disease, Diabetes, Epilepsy, HIV/AIDS, Parkinson Disease, Multiple Sclerosis, Cystic Fibrosis, Lupus, and ...

Conclusion

Job proclaimed, “Man who is born of a woman is few of days and full of trouble” (Job 14:1). Life can be challenging. The only thing we have control over is our attitudes and our disposition in the midst of the pain and anguish.

Ultimately, life’s ills should draw us closer to God and keep us reminded that this world is not our home. Remember – “We should always pray and not give up” (Luke 18:1).

Study

Which Psalms would you characterize as lament? Are they lamenting sickness, an enemy, etc.? Praise and thanksgiving psalms vs. lamenting psalms?

Practice

Is there someone that you know who is experiencing chronic pain (that they will deal with for the duration of their life)? What can you do to be helpful and an encouragement to them?

Teach

Encourage fellow Christians to express their hurts, pain, discouragement, and doubts to God.