

Fact Sheet for **“How Long?”**
Psalm 13:1-6

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Read about Francis Scott Key at

[HTTP://CHRISTIANHERITAGEFELLOWSHIP.COM/FRANCIS-SCOTT-KEY-1779-1843/](http://CHRISTIANHERITAGEFELLOWSHIP.COM/FRANCIS-SCOTT-KEY-1779-1843/)

Consider experiences that caused him to fear. Then, consider his words of faith.

One of the great heroes of the Bible, David, the human author of many of the Psalms, often wrote of his struggle between fear and faith. This psalm can encourage us to faith in the face of our fears.

^{ESV} **Psalm 13:1** *To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.*

Lament Over Distress (1-2)

Notice the four times David says, “How long” in these two verses.

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?

Take a moment to imagine David’s emotions as he wrote these words. Perhaps this was written when he was fleeing from King Saul.

Sorrow is the way we react to such experiences as pain, suffering, or affliction. It is the opposite of joy and gladness.

David had no answer to his fourfold question, “How long?”

There is a saying that I’ve heard, I’ve sometimes used, quite out of context. “I pray, but it seems that the heavens are brass.” These words actually are taken from a verse in Deuteronomy 28:23. If you read this verse in context it actually has nothing to do with prayer. It is a curse that is partially explained in the following verse. Even though this verse has nothing to do with prayer how often has each of us prayed and God doesn’t seem to answer? We’ve each prayed with the feelings of, “How long?”

There is a saying that goes, “God may be slow, but he is never late.” Add to this saying the following verses.

ESV Isaiah 55:8-9 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. ⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

God is all wise and we are not. God has a good purpose in any perceived delay. His desire is that we trust him.

Petition for Deliverance (3-4)

Three imperatives

- 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.

Confidence in the Lord (5-6)

- 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.

When David wrote this psalm he had no deliverance as of yet from his enemy! At the same time he chose to trust and rejoice in God.

Rejoicing in the face of sorrow?
Singing in response to fear?
Praise following the cry of "How long?"

These responses flow from David's considered and deliberate choices, *not* from his emotions of sorrow. David was confident that God would fulfill his promises and protect him.

This is a strong message from Psalm 13.

What in your life right now makes you anxious (fearful)? Is it something financial or medical? Is it something with family or upcoming decisions? Perhaps you have been praying those "How long" prayers.

What has God promised for those who love him?

If you wait until you "feel" like praising God in the face of these rather than choosing to praise God for his steadfast love and watch care over you, then it will be a long time before you will praise him.

Take a lesson from David. Find your encouragement in God, not in your immediate circumstances.