

The Lord Answers Questions; The Fool Says “There is No God!”

Psalms 13 & 14

Psalm 13 - *“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 daily? How long will my enemy be exalted over me? Consider and hear me, O LORD my God. Enlighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death; lest my enemy say, “I have prevailed against him,” lest those who trouble me rejoice when I am moved.*

But I have trusted in Your mercy. My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation. I will sing to the LORD, because He has dealt bountifully with me.”

Background Notes for Psalm 13

The title of this Psalm of David says that it was for the choir director, so it was to be put to music and used for public worship. But when David wrote this psalm he was facing a prolonged period of oppression - possibly during his lengthy wilderness sojourn when he was escaping the angry pursuit of King Saul, who had become David's enemy.

“Lest my enemy say, ‘I have prevailed against him’” (v4). Most likely the “enemy” mentioned here was King Saul. 1 Samuel 18:29 says that Saul *“remained David’s enemy for the rest of his days.”* This prolonged time of opposition and discouragement prompted David to ask the Lord, “How long will these conditions prevail?” He longed for the Lord’s kingdom of righteousness to be established on earth. But David moved “from sighing to singing,” as he trusted the Lord to answer his questions.

Doctrinal Point for Psalm 13

“How long, O Lord?” is a biblical prayer.

David repeated this question four times in his prayer to the Lord.

- *“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 daily?”*
- *“How long will my enemy be exalted over me?”*

Have you ever asked the Lord the same question, when you were in a sustained period of oppression? Have you ever wondered, “How long will this go on, Lord? It seems like you’ve forgotten me, or you’re hiding from me. How long will you allow this injustice to continue? How long will this sorrow last?”

David asked that question four times, so we see that “How long, O Lord?” is a biblical prayer. But notice that David had the proper attitude when he prayed this prayer. He wasn’t **demanding** an answer from God, and he didn’t have a rebellious heart. No! He was simply asking God an honest question.

In verses 3-4 his main concerns were:

- that he wouldn’t hear from God before he died: *“Consider and hear me, O LORD my God. Enlighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death.”*
- that his unrighteous adversaries would be able to boast that they had won, and that certainly wouldn’t bring glory to God. *“Lest my enemy say, ‘I have prevailed against him’ - lest those who trouble me rejoice when I am moved.”*

So David had the right attitude when he asked, “How long, O Lord?” And as long as we have the right attitude, we can come to the Lord with our “How long?” questions. “How long, O Lord, will my family problems go on?” Or, “How long, O Lord, must we endure carrying the whole load of responsibility with no help from fellow believers?” Or, “How long will the trial that we’re facing go on?” There are many more “How long, O Lord?” questions, and it’s not wrong to ask these questions - as long as we have the right attitude and are not making angry demands of God.

“How long, O Lord?” is a biblical prayer.

Practical Application for Psalm 13

Get rid of your doubts by counting your blessings!

David got rid of his doubts in verses 5-6: *“But I have trusted in Your mercy. My heart rejoices in Your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, for He has dealt bountifully with me.”* David had moved from sorrow at the beginning of the psalm, to singing at the end of the psalm! He had moved from doubt to confidence. What was the key? **He counted his blessings!**

The blessing of God’s loving kindness - His unfailing, loyal love: *“I have trusted in Your mercy”* (v5); the blessing of God’s salvation: *“My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation”* (v5); and the continual blessings of God’s care and provision: *“I will sing to the LORD, because He has dealt bountifully with me”* (v6).

If we would only follow David’s example and count our blessings instead of our problems, we too would move from doubt to confidence! Do you have doubts about God’s care and protection and love for you? If you do, start counting your blessings! Think, for example, of the worst scenarios in which God has preserved and protected you. Have you ever

counted those blessings? Have you ever thanked the Lord for saving you from “what could have been”? Those are certainly blessings, aren't they? Get rid of your doubts by counting your blessings!

Psalm 14 - *“The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ They are corrupt. They have done abominable works. There is none who does good. The LORD looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek God. They have all turned aside. They have altogether become corrupt. There is none who does good - no, not one. Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge, who eat up my people as they eat bread, and do not call on the LORD? There they are in great fear, for God is with the generation of the righteous. You shame the counsel of the poor, but the LORD is his refuge. Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion! When the LORD brings back the captivity of His people. Let Jacob rejoice and Israel be glad.”*

Background Notes for Psalm 14

This psalm is very similar to Psalm 53. In fact, the two psalms are almost identical. In Psalm 14:1, David described the person who says there is no God as a “fool.” The “fool” mentioned here is not a person who has a low IQ. No. In Scripture, a “fool” is a person who is morally insensitive, and one who lives as if there is no God. Proverbs 1:7 says, *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”* And Isaiah 32:6 says, *“For the fool will speak foolishness and his heart will work iniquity: to practice ungodliness, to utter error against the Lord...”*

Psalm 14:1 provides a classic case of what it means to “pull scripture out of context.” “Did you know the Bible teaches that God does not exist?” “It does?” “Yes! Psalm 14:1 says, ‘There is no God.’ So God does not exist - right?” Obviously that’s a ludicrous conclusion, because the context of the phrase “There is no God” has been totally ignored. Only a fool would say there is no God!

Although we may laugh at such a ridiculous illustration, in reality many Scriptures are pulled out of their context, and sometimes this results in heretical conclusions.

Always consider the context of every Scripture!

Doctrinal Point for Psalm 14

People are not “basically good.”

Many people believe - and many religions teach - that “people are basically good.” They say that people only do bad things because of the influence of their negative surroundings. But that’s not what the Bible teaches! Look again at

verses 1-3: *“There is none who does good. The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek God. They have all turned aside. They have together become corrupt. There is none who does good - no, not one.”*

Those verses are quoted in Roman 3:10-12. In the context of Romans 3, the apostle Paul quoted these verses to show that the whole world is guilty before God. *“As it is written: ‘There is none righteous, no, not one. There is none who understands. There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside. They have together become unprofitable. There is none who does good, no, not one.’”*

In Psalm 14:4-6, David couldn't get over the ignorance of the wicked, who were unaware that they were in a very dangerous position: *“Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge, who... do not call on the Lord? There they are in great fear, for God is with the generation of the righteous.”*

Those who hurt God's people will reap the judgment of God. God is not only the **refuge** of His people - He is also the **vindicator** of His people. *“God is with the generation of the righteous. You shame the poor, but the Lord is his refuge” (v5-6).*

Practical Application for Psalm 14

Do you yearn for righteousness - or riches?

“Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion! When the Lord brings back the captivity of His people, let Jacob rejoice and Israel be glad” (v7). In this verse we see that David longed for the righteous kingdom of God to be established on this earth. Righteousness is what he yearned for - not riches, nor pleasure, nor power.

What about us? If given the option, would we rather see righteousness prevail in our nation - or would we rather become wealthy? (And you can't choose both!) Do you yearn for righteousness - or do you yearn for riches? Good question, isn't it? David's desire will be realized when the Lord Jesus Christ returns. At that time the Lord will establish His righteous kingdom on earth. Then restored Israel will be returned to the Land - and to the Lord! Then righteousness will indeed reign.

Do you long for that time on this earth? It will come! But what about right now? Do you yearn for righteousness - or riches?