

**A. The Structure of Psalm 13 consists of three strophes:**

**a) Strophe 1:**

**Ps 13:1** How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me?

**Ps 13:2** How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart?

How long will my enemy triumph over me?

**b) Strophe 2:**

**Ps 13:3** Look at me and answer, O LORD my God.

Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death;

**Ps 13:4** my enemy will say, "I have overcome him,"

and my foes will rejoice when I fall.

**c) Strophe 3:**

**Ps 13:5** But I trust in your unfailing love;

my heart rejoices in your salvation.

**Ps 13:6** I will sing to the LORD,

for he has been good to me.

**B. Psalm 13 is a classic Psalm of complaint. While Ps 13 is a complaint of a personal nature, many other complaint Psalms involve the people in general. Complaint Psalms typically include some or all of the following features:**

- a) An address to God for help.
- b) A poetic and stylized description of the problem or crisis.
- c) An affirmation of trust.
- d) A series of petitions.
- e) An additional argument or appeal.
- f) A vow of praise promising public testimony and gratitude.
- g) Confirmation of being heard, and that God will answer.

**C. Structural Analysis:**

**a) Internal Cohesion – literary elements the author employed that holds the Psalm together:**

1. Cohesion in the first strophe is found in the chain of questions "how long" is used 4 times. The 1<sup>st</sup> two lines deal with God seemingly turning His back on David. The next 3 lines has to do with the inner turmoil David is suffering.
2. Cohesion in the second strophe is found in the contrast of the personal positive appeal (vs 3) and 2<sup>nd</sup> person negative (vs 4). The positive has 2 commands and 2 vocatives for God in a neat Chiasm, after which the negative occurs.
3. Cohesion in the third strophe is shown in personal positive statements of faith (vs 5), and a positive expected outcome (vs 6).

**b) The author's appeal and literary movement within the text:**

1. In strophe 1 – the author states his problem. It is a plaintive complaint where the problem is simply stated. Within his complaint, there are 4 components:
  - (1) In line 1 – the word translated as 'forget' actually means 'ignore.' To ignore is a passive

action – the author presumes God knows of the problem but is passively inactive. The prayer is a request to rouse God to action.

- (2) In line 2 – God is now revealed as ‘hiding.’ To hide represents a purposeful action – the author is in a conundrum, why would God at first ignore me and now hide from me? It doesn’t make sense to the author who knows God and has confidence in His love.
- (3) In line 3 – the author now reminds God of the internal pressure that is building within him, specifically the ‘cares on my mind’ and ‘grief’ which speak to his inner pain.
- (4) In line 4 – the author reveals there is also external pressure he’s suffering from – there is an enemy involved that has power over him.

Within the first strophe in only 4 lines of text we are now aware of a complex problem involving apparent passive and purposeful in-action on God’s part, and internal and external pressures the author is struggling with.

2. In strophe 2 – the author makes his appeal to God. It is an impassioned demand – one that a friend would make to another friend... something like, “I don’t get it! How can you do this to me! The one You love!” Someone would not likely make this sort of a request without an intimate relationship with God.
  - (1) In line 1 – the first half of the demand is “look at me!” – this is the antithesis of the passive ‘ignore’ in the first line of strophe 1; it is a demand for attention. This is not an arrogant demand, but rather an expectation based upon the Psalmist’s understanding that God knows him and loves him. The second half of the demand “give light to my eyes” actually translates better as “restore the luster to my eyes” by which the author’s view of things will be renewed. It is lyrically a very powerful line!
  - (2) In line 2 – the author’s personal appeal to God involves Him in the expected outcome if God doesn’t provide help (CR – Exodus 34:9; Numbers 11:15; Esther 7:3). Here the author is reminding God that “this isn’t just about me, it’s about us [You and me]... please don’t let this happen!”
  - (3) Lines 3 and 4 are the additional argument referenced in section B-e in the outline above. It is a restatement of the “You and me” theme as people know God has acted on David’s behalf on numerous occasions.
3. In strophe 3 – the author states that his confidence in God. This is not what we would call ‘blind faith’ but instead faith that is based upon the Psalmist’s personal experience that God cares for him and knowing God has come through for him in the past. Once you know God has shown up, you have much more confidence that He will continue to do so. This is very different relationally because its personal. Those who haven’t experienced God’s personal provision in their life typically believe that ‘He might’ or ‘He could’ show up. That God ‘will’ show up doesn’t necessarily mean that we know how He’ll do it or what He’ll do, but it is confidence born out of personal experience that God has before and He will also now... but maybe in ways I don’t necessarily understand how it will all play out. God is still Sovereign to this Psalmist, and not some genie in a bottle that if I do the right thing then my desired outcome will occur.
  - (1) In lines 1 and 2 – ‘I trust in Your unfailing love,’ I ‘rejoice in Your salvation’ – this puts the temporal [expectation] in juxtaposition to the eternal [hope]. It is an Old Covenant affirmation of Paul’s New Covenant conclusion in Romans 8:28 – “And we know that God

causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.”

- (2) In lines 3 and 4 – the Psalmist rejoices because God has been good to him. In the midst of the problem, in the ongoing turmoil, where he knows he has no power over the circumstances he faces... he trusts God’s eternal plan because he has experienced God’s Goodness.

- D. Conclusion – the psalmist has confidence in God because he knew God personally, and as a result he knows God and trusts His heart and His eternal plan which includes in this case the psalmist’s salvation and redemption. I think that much of our modern day faith especially in some areas of the world (such as America), has become insipid or tepid because there is little strength or passion in the relationship. Many churches preach a “seeker friendly” version of the Gospel that is focused more on “making me feel better about myself” and promising a “free get out of hell pass” ... (also known as “fire insurance”). This is not what biblical faith or Christian discipleship is about. I have dear friends and family who are missionaries where they meet many people in difficult situations. They recount with joy the miraculous events when God shows up in someone’s life, and it changes them forever.**
- a) The Navigator magazine “Disciple!” in the Winter 2016 edition has a powerful article written by Stephen W. Sorenson entitled “Give us this Day our Daily Bread – Why do Believers in a Land of Plenty Need to Ask for Daily Bread?” This article can be found on the Navigators website at the link below –  
<http://www.navigators.org/Tools/Newsletters/Featured%20Newsletters/Disciple/February%202016/February%202016/Give%20Us%20Today%20Our%20Daily%20Bread>
- b) I found the article compelling and also convicting, and well worth the read. It is a great reminder that we are saved not merely for our comfort here and now, but to engage in God’s mission in advancing redemptive history. Sorenson teaches that the Greek word translated as “bread” is actually “Arton” and it literally means “that which is essential to sustain life.” The article concludes with the assertion, that “We can count on God’s faithfulness to keep His promises. We will experience that faithfulness as we explore what ‘give us this day our daily bread’ really means. As we step out in faith, we’ll discover a firm foundation we’re standing on, not thin air. [There] We’ll meet a God who truly makes a difference in our daily lives”... and by extension in the lives of others.
- c) Finding God showing up in the middle of our desperate need changes a person... these are what are called “Threshold Events,” and when they occur we know that God showed up and came through for me. It’s not merely pie in the sky and not blind faith, it is the type of faith the Psalmist was writing about in Psalm 13. It is the kind of faith that comes out of our desperate need, and when we have that real moment with God everything changes and our abandonment to God becomes a reality. It is this type of experience that forever changes a person, and makes us teachable and resilient disciples who become intent on carrying out the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. This is what Christian Discipleship is all about. This Psalm speaks to the Spiritual Vitality David had. For more on developing Spiritual vitality see the AD article below:  
<http://www.authenticdiscipleship.org/pdfs/2-spiritual-formation/Spiritual%20Disciplines/SF%201.5%20Prayer%20Practicum%203%20-%20Developing%20Spiritual%20Vitality.pdf>