

How Long O Lord #2209 The Faith We Sing by Barbara Woollett 1990

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How long O Lord will You forget to answer my prayer?
No tokens of Your love I see, Your face is turned away from me;
I wrestle with despair.

How long, O Lord will You forsake and leave me this way?
When will You come to my relief? My heart is overwhelmed with grief
by evil night and day.

How long, O Lord? But You forgive with mercy from above.
I find that all Your ways are just, I learn to praise You and to trust
in Your unfailing love.

This song can be a personal lament (an expression of grief or sorrow)...

Can you identify with the pain and loneliness of verses 1 and 2?
What experiences caused that? How did you act/react when you felt God's face
was "turned away"?

Have you had experience(s) that brought you to the place of verse 3? How did that
feel? Did it affect the way you faced subsequent challenges? Why?

This song can be a global/corporate lament...

A short list of events from 1990, the year this song was written:

- Reunification of Germany
- Nelson Mandela released from prison
- In Virginia, Douglas Wilder becomes the first African-American governor
- Royal New Zealand Navy discontinues its daily rum ration
- Namibia becomes independent after 75 years of South African rule
- Kathleen Young and Irene Templeton ordained as the first female Anglican priests in the UK
- Americans With Disabilities Act signed by President George W Bush
- Indian Prime Minister VP Singh announces plans to reserve 49% of civil service jobs for lower caste Hindus, causing riots that leave at least 70 people dead
- President Bush signed a new Clean Air Act focused on urban pollution and cancer-causing industrial emissions
- Mary Robinson becomes the first female president of Ireland

Looking at this list, what events relate to verses 1 and 2?

What events from this list are examples of the progression from verses 1 and 2, to verse 3? How does it make you feel to see that progress?

When you look at the world today, do you see things similar to this list?

What do you think is the reason behind that? How does that make you feel?

2 Chronicles 30:9b “For the Lord your God is full of kindness and mercy and will not continue to turn away his face from you if you return to him.” The Living Bible¹

Nehemiah 9:17 “They refused to obey and didn’t pay any attention to the miracles you did for them; instead, they rebelled and appointed a leader to take them back into slavery in Egypt! But you are a God of forgiveness, always ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to become angry, and full of love and mercy; you didn’t abandon them” The Living Bible¹

Psalm 25:16 “Come, Lord, and show me your mercy, for I am helpless, overwhelmed, in deep distress” The Living Bible¹

Psalm 111:4 “Who can forget the wonders he performs—deeds of mercy and of grace?” The Living Bible¹

Isaiah 51:5a “My mercy and justice are coming soon; your salvation is on the way.” The Living Bible¹

2 Corinthians 1: 3-4 “What a wonderful God we have—he is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the source of every mercy, and the one who so wonderfully comforts and strengthens us in our hardships and trials. And why does he do this? So that when others are troubled, needing our sympathy and encouragement, we can pass on to them this same help and comfort God has given us.” The Living Bible¹

God’s mercy is referenced over 100 times in the Bible, and these are just a few examples. This song is based on Psalm 13, verses 5-6 say “But I will always trust in you and in your mercy and shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord because he has blessed me so richly.”

Think of some times that you have seen God’s mercy in the lives of others. How did you feel? Have you felt God’s mercy in your own life? If you have, how has that affected your outlook on life? If not, why do you feel this way?

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