

Psalm 13; Romans 8:12-17: How Long, O Lord?
Small Group Notes

Opener: Share a scary moment – public speaking, getting lost, losing something precious.

We've got two passages this week for an important reason – as we've been praying for the church we've felt that there's a lot of fear which is lingering and stopping us from worshipping God as he deserves and how we want and need to.

Read Psalm 13.

Q. What do you suppose the Psalmist is concerned about first and foremost?

A. Clearly he's facing his enemies but I wonder if actually his biggest fear is where is God when he needs him most?

Q. Look at verses 5 & 6. What do you notice about the words used? [If you need a clue, look at the tense.]

A. It's future tense. Despite his anxieties he's going to praise God because God has been there for him before and provided for his needs.

Q. Can you identify with this or is it hard to trust that God will show up in times of trouble?

Read Romans 8:12-17.

Q. In v14, what does it mean to be led by the Spirit of God?

A. It's about submission. If you allow yourself to be led you're not longer in control of your own destiny! But that's ok because as Paul's just said in v13, if you live by the flesh you die; if you live by the Spirit you live!

Q. v15: "you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear." Fear of what? What is the spirit of slavery?

A. Fear of sin and death. The spirit of slavery is all kinds of worldly misguidings – the enemy, idolatry, sin, selfishness – it's like "the flesh" - it's NOT God's Spirit.

Q. Paul says to "not fall back into fear" but then in verse 17 says that we need to suffer with Christ. Was that just the first century church or do you think that applies to us today? How is it possible to suffer with Christ but not fear?

A. Suffering looks very different for different Christians the world over. Some face the real possibility of death, some think they're being persecuted but in reality are just feeling sorry for themselves or they're obnoxious and they deserve it!! The fear of sin and death is different from the fear of man (Matt 10:28). Paul's saying – don't go back to that old life where you lived for yourself but trust that the Spirit will guide you where you need to go which could well be similar sufferings to Christ (pain, loneliness, death).

Q. Is it all worth it in order to cry, "Abba Father?" What would this mean?

A. This is intimacy with the heavenly Father through the Holy Spirit. If it was the only thing you had in the world it would be enough (provided we fully grasped what it meant).

Close: Do you feel like you're a child of God or do you feel like you're on your own? Are you living in fear of something? Remember: God is love and perfect love casts out all fear (1 John 4). If there's anyone in the group who is fearful or who hasn't really tasted what it means to belong to God, pray for them today.