

Psalm 38

by Henry Law

The sermon on Psalm 38 explores the anguish of sin, the need for God's mercy, and the hope found in prayer amidst suffering.

Scripture: Psalm 38:1-2, Psalm 38:6, Psalm 38:9, Psalm 38:15

Topics: "Sin And Suffering", "Gods Chastisement"

Description

Henry Law preaches about the Psalmist's deep sense of sin and the just chastisement he faces, acknowledging that sin leads to various afflictions and suffering, even for God's children. Despite the anguish caused by sin and God's displeasure, the Psalmist recognizes that afflictions come from a place of paternal love, prompting him to seek mercy and relief from God. The Psalmist's agony of soul, caused by a sense of sin and God's anger, is likened to piercing arrows, heavy burdens, and putrid sores, reflecting the deep anguish of a sin-stricken soul.

Transcript

The Psalmist, in deep sense of sin, and writhing under just chastisement, spreads his sad condition before God.

1. "O Lord, do not rebuke me in Your wrath; neither chasten me in Your hot displeasure."

What anguish follows subsequent to sin! Sin is the prolific source of every woe. It sows vile seed, and crops of suffering spring up. It is so in the case of God's own children. Through lack of vigilance, through restraint of prayer, through deafness to the Spirit's voice, through stiflings of conscience, through yielding to the craving of the flesh, and neglect of the sacred Word, they often stumble and fall grievously. God sees. His displeasure is justly kindled. Indignation puts forth angry hand. The scourge is not withheld, and miserable is the offender's case.

But he well knows that his afflictions spring not from the dust. He knows the hand which chastises is the hand of paternal love. He feels that his sufferings call him to the mercy-seat. He cries not for entire removal of what is so fully merited, but for alleviation and relief. He pleads, Let not anger wholly crush me. Let not hot displeasure be too fierce a furnace. "O Lord, do not rebuke me in Your wrath; neither chasten me in Your hot displeasure."

2, 3, 4, 5. "For Your arrows stick fast in me, and Your hand presses me sore. There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin. For my iniquities have gone over my head; as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds stench, and are corrupt, because of my foolishness."

As piercing arrows inflict rankling pain, as heavy burdens overwhelm and crush, thus sense of sin, and realized displeasure of God, bring agony of soul, and lay it low in sorrow. A wounded and bruised spirit, who can bear? There is close sympathy between the mind and body. The wasted flesh reflects the pining spirit, and the whole frame shows ravages of malady. Iniquities, which seemed at first but tiny drops, soon swell into the billows of the overwhelming deep, and threaten to engulf the struggling sufferer. When the floodgates open, descending torrents come, as a drowning deluge. No images can exhaust the anguish. The putrid sores but faintly show the miseries of the sin-stricken soul.

6, 7, 8. "I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long. For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease; and there is no soundness in my flesh. I am feeble and sore broken; I have groaned by reason of the anguish of my heart."

The Spirit still draws back the veil and shows in fearful colors the deep afflictions of the awakened conscience. Trouble occupies the heart. The head hangs down. The stooping gait is evidence of failing strength. Let those who seek to find delight in sin ponder this portrait. Through the whole day, from rising to declining sun, mourning is the constant comrade. The falling tears, the sighing heart, proclaim that misery presents no respite. The ruined health adds woe to woe. Loud lamentations prove that deep anxiety prevails within. Who can contemplate these results, and not detest the cruel monster!

9. "Lord, all my desire is before You; and my groaning is not hidden from You."

Out of these fearful depths there is a ready access to the throne of grace. The afflicted soul looks upward and appeals to God. No direct application is expressed, but attention is humbly craved to the desires which have a language in the ears of God. "The Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered; and He who searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit."

10, 11, 12. "My heart pants, my strength fails me; as for the light of my eyes, it also is gone from me. My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore, and my kinsmen stand afar off. Those also who seek my life lay snares for me; and those who seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long."

The Psalmist, in the bitterness of his sorrow, enlarges on the aggravations of his misery. When sorrows multiply, how sweet is the solace of sympathizing friends! The complaint is heard that not only such relief was denied, but that enemies endeavored to ensnare him, and ceased not to propagate injurious deceits.

Faith sees that a greater than David is here. The "Man of Sorrows" thus shows the writhings of His heart, when He appeared as by imputation, the bearer of His people's sins. While in spirit we hear His moans, let us bless Him from our inmost souls for all His substitutional anguish. He was bruised for our iniquities. He was wounded for our sins.

13, 14. "But I, as a deaf man, heard not; and I was as a dumb man that opens not his mouth. Thus I was as a man that hears not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs."

Affliction's school is not a joyous place. Lessons of mirth and merriment are not learned there. Sorrow sits pensive on the pupil's brow; but it is a sorrow which leads to abiding fruits of peace. Tribulation works patience. Proud petulance receives a death-blow. Reproof upbraids not. Meek submission bows its humble head.

Surely here the blessed Jesus is conspicuous. "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before its shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth." No cruel taunts drew from His lips an angry reply. Majestic silence was His rebuke to Pilate. To keep our mouths as it were with a bridle is divine art. This is the blessed fruit of discipline under sorrow's scourge.

15. "For in You, O Lord, do I hope; You will hear, O Lord my God."

The true believer looks not to himself for power of defense or triumph over foes. His hope is fixed on Heaven. He knows that aid is at hand, even the aid which God alone can give. His prayers will stir up God to help, even the God who promises to hear. Thus patience works experience, and experience hope.

16. "For I said, Hear me, lest otherwise they should rejoice over me; when my foot slips, they magnify themselves against me."

Faith is permitted humbly to expostulate with God. Come, let us reason together. Audience with God is craved on the plea that if no answer comes, and no upholding grace supported, ungodly triumph would rejoice, and God's great name would be blasphemed. God's children are always watched with spiteful malice. The slightest tottering in the upward path causes the foe to raise insulting head, and boast of his happy and superior lot.

17, 18. "For I am ready to halt, and my sorrow is continually before me. For I will declare my iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin."

The believer is always conscious that in himself no strength resides. Unless upheld, he will surely fall. He knows his weakness; and he deeply mourns. He knows how often he has sadly fallen. He tells out his iniquity into the ears of God, and spreads out his sorrowing case.

19, 20. "But my enemies are lively, and they are strong; and those who hate me wrongfully are multiplied. Those also who render evil for good are my adversaries; because I follow the thing that is good."

If outward circumstances proved internal state, the ungodly would often seem to have the favorite's lot. Lively mirth is frequently in their dwelling. Their bow remains in strength; their ranks expand in numbers. The Psalmist witnessed this superficial prosperity. In every age the enemies of God are thus allowed to have their short-lived triumph. The godly are not thereby provoked either to distrust God, or to retaliate on their foes. They know that their godliness is the cause of all their persecution, and that the path of righteousness leads through the land of hate and cruelty. But their constant effort is to overcome evil with good; and to be meek followers of the patient Lamb of God, the holy Jesus, who could testify, "Many good works have I shown you from My Father, for which of those works do you stone Me?"

21, 22. "Forsake me not, O Lord; O my God, do not be far from me. Make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation."

Prayer is the believer's constant refuge. Blessed are the trials which impel to the mercy-seat. Here triple supplications call down the presence of the Lord. Forsake me not--do not be far from me, or be very near

me--make haste to help me. The prayer is intensified by the invocation, O Lord, O my God, O Lord, my salvation. It is a grand privilege to be permitted to use such wrestling earnestness. It will assuredly prevail. Answers will richly come; and God will show Himself a very present help in time of trouble.

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