

Restless, Moaning, Pained and Horrified

Psalm Series

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Bible Text: Psalm 55

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Psalm 55.

Give ear to my prayer, O God, And do not hide Yourself from my supplication. Attend to me, and hear me; I am restless in my complaint, and moan noisily, Because of the voice of the enemy, Because of the oppression of the wicked; For they bring down trouble upon me, And in wrath they hate me. My heart is severely pained within me, And the terrors of death have fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling have come upon me, And horror has overwhelmed me. So I said, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest. Indeed, I would wander far off, And remain in the wilderness. Selah I would hasten my escape From the windy storm and tempest."

Destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongues, For I have seen violence and strife in the city. Day and night they go around it on its walls; Iniquity and trouble are also in the midst of it. Destruction is in its midst; Oppression and deceit do not depart from its streets. For it is not an enemy who reproaches me; Then I could bear it. Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me; Then I could hide from him. But it was you, a man my equal, My companion and my acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, And walked to the house of God in the throng. Let death seize them; Let them go down alive into hell, For wickedness is in their dwellings and among them.

As for me, I will call upon God, And the LORD shall save me. Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, And He shall hear my voice. He has redeemed my soul in peace from the battle that was against me, For there were many against me. God will hear, and afflict them, Even He who abides from of old. Selah Because they do not change, Therefore they do not fear God. He has put forth his hands against those who were at peace with him; He has broken his covenant. The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, But war was in his heart; His words were softer than oil, Yet they were drawn swords. Cast your burden on

the LORD, And He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved. But You, O God, shall bring them down to the pit of destruction; Bloodthirsty and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; But I will trust in You.¹

Let's pray.

Father, use your Word in our hearts to accomplish eternal things we ask through Christ our Lord. Amen.

If one takes a superficial look at Christianity one might conclude that Christianity takes a superficial like at life. We talk of love and joy and peace and we sing about a new believer finding heaven above a softer blue, earth around a sweeter green and something living in every hue that Christless eyes have never seen. But as every believer knows or eventually discovers, the Christian life is not just one big fellowship supper.

Author Philip Yancey in his book *Disappointment with God* writes of watching a television evangelist who was, quote, "Exuding faith and optimism. Leading toward the camera, his craggy face splitting into a big grin and jabbing his finger toward a million viewers, 'Something good is going to happen to you this week,' he said coaxing three syllables out of the word 'good.' He was at his salesman best, utterly convincing. A few days later," Yancey wrote, "I heard on the news that his son had committed suicide."

Life has great anguish, great grief, deep heartache for Christians and non Christians alike. There are problems that seem to have no solutions. There are roadblocks that seem impassable and detours that seem to send us backwards. There are times when even committed believers feel like they simply cannot go on. They want to go up. They want to throw in the towel. They wish they could just fly away from their job, from their problems, from their family or even from their God.

David was experiencing some of these feelings when he wrote this contemplative psalm that we call Psalm 55. Look at verse one.

Give ear to my prayer, O God, And do not hide Yourself from my supplication. Attend to me, and hear me; I am restless in my complaint, and moan noisily, Because of the voice of the enemy, Because of the oppression of the wicked; For they bring down trouble upon me, And in wrath they hate me. My heart is severely pained within me, And the terrors of death have fallen upon me.²

"Hear me, O God," he says. "Don't hide yourself from my supplication."

Have you ever had the feeling that God was just not listening, that he had turned his back on you? David was evidently struggling against that fear.

¹ Psalm 55:1-23.

² Psalm 55:1-4.

“Attend to me, Lord. Hear. I am restless in my complaint,” he says.

It could be translated, “I give my sad thoughts free course. I let my thoughts wander about. And I moan noisily,” he said. “I moan noisily.”

If you spend much time in a hospital or a nursing home you have probably heard men or women moaning noisily from physical agony or from some sort of mental anguish that cannot be easily medicated away.

What, in this case, was the cause of David’s great anguish? Well, he talks about the voice of the enemy, the oppression of the wicked who brought down trouble upon him and who in their wrath hated him. And how did David react to their oppression, this trouble that they brought upon him, their wrath and their hatred?

His heart was severely pained within him he says. The terrors of death fell upon him. Fearfulness, trembling came upon him. Horror overwhelmed him.

Think about this. This is David. This is God’s anointed king. This is the favored one, the man of great faith, the man after God’s own heart, the sweet psalmist of Israel. This is David. He is terrified. He is horrified. He is fearful. He is moaning loudly. He doesn’t even know that God is hearing.

Are you getting this, Pollyanna? This believer was in the midst of severe heartache, fearfulness, trembling, overwhelming horror, terrors of death. He was restless, complaining to God, moaning noisily. He had no assurance as he cried out that God as even paying any attention or that he even heard him.

Consider David’s words more closely.

He says, “My heart is severely pained.”³

Now that is a phrase that is normally reserved for the pain of a woman in childbirth.

“The terrors of death have fallen upon me.”⁴

We drove recently, as some of you know, through the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina. If you have driven through the Blue Ridge Mountains or, I suppose, other mountains, you will notice sometimes these runaway lanes carved out of the mountain, not paved, but filled with sand. And they are for trucks, 18 wheelers that happen to be barreling down the mountain and find out that they have lost their breaks, their breaks have burned out. What do they do? Not much hope for them other than just go over the mountain.

³ Psalm 55:4.

⁴ Ibid.

So the [?] said put in these runaway lanes.

David was experiencing an emotion similar to that of a trucker whose 18 wheeler is barreling down a mountain without any brakes.

I don't know if Carl Hancock... Carl, have you ever experienced this? Well, we will talk about it later. Carl was on the road a long time. It has got to be fearful that the horrifying emotion, the emotion of a hostage held by murderous terrorists.

'The terrors of death have fallen upon me,'⁵ David said.

Fearfulness and trembling.

"Like housebreakers," Spurgeon writes, "these robbers were entering his soul. He did not know what would happen next or how soon the worst would come."

He was so terrified that he says he was literally trembling, trembling.

Now, I don't know how many times in my life, maybe a very few times that I was so frightened that I was literally trembling, literally shaking. But you know what David is talking about here.

One commentator notes, "It is not inconsistent with godliness to be much moved with fear in time of danger. Natural affections are not taken away in conversion, but rather sanctified and moderated."

And David says, "Horror has overwhelmed me."

Spurgeon says, "As Jonah went down into the sea, so David went down into the deeps of horror enveloped in darkness."

Now we don't know for sure what the particular circumstances were that caused David such distress, but there was recorded for us a catastrophe in David's life that seems to fit the description here. It was when he was forsaken and betrayed and chased from the city of Jerusalem, fleeing for his life from his once loving citizens who were now in league with his own rebellious son, his own rebellious son who was determined to kill his father so that he might sit upon his throne, the king of Israel.

Can you imagine the anguish that the rebellion of Absalom would have brought to David's heart, the feeling of betrayal, the feeling of complete failure as a parent, as a father, as a king, the feeling of abandonment by God who had, of course, anointed him and set him apart for the throne, the sense of being utterly forsaken as even some of us most trusted friends were now trying to kill him?

The Scriptures describe that scene.

⁵ Ibid.

“So David went up by the Ascent of the Mount of Olives, and wept as he went up; and he had his head covered and went barefoot. And all the people who were with him covered their heads and went up, weeping as they went up.”⁶ 2 Samuel 15.

David felt the terror of Jonah cast into the sea. And, like Jonah, David yearned for relief.

Look at verse six.

So I said, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest. Indeed, I would wander far off, And remain in the wilderness. Selah I would hasten my escape From the windy storm and tempest."⁷

Have you ever felt like you just wanted to escape, just fly off, just run away, just hide? Well, Elijah felt like that. He said, “It is enough! Now, LORD, take my life.”⁸

“I don’t even want to live anymore. Now, Lord, just take my life.”

Jonah was so miserable in his anger that he, too, wanted to die in those last few verses of the book of Jonah. He wanted to die.

The temptation to flee from our trials or from the path of duty is a very real temptation and people succumb to it every day. But the Lord says to us, “Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”⁹

Rather than give up, as David was tempted to do, he went back to his well of faith. He was like a tree planted by the rivers of water. His leaf did not wither.

It is no more noble to succumb to the temptation to flee from our trials and abandon one’s responsibilities than it is to succumb to any other temptation in life. So rather than give up, David drew from his resources. His roots were deep in God’s Word and his leaf did not wither. He did not give up to those feelings of despair, but rather he prayed that God would intervene for him.

Verse nine.

Destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongues, For I have seen violence and strife in the city. Day and night they go around it on its walls; Iniquity and trouble are also in the midst of it. Destruction is in its midst; Oppression and deceit do not depart from its streets.¹⁰

⁶ 2 Samuel 15:30.

⁷ Psalm 55:6-8.

⁸ 1 Kings 19:4.

⁹ 1 Corinthians 15:58.

¹⁰ Psalm 55:9-11.

He says, “Lord, these enemies who are arrayed against me, divide their tongues. Confuse their counsel,” in other words. “urn their war counsel into a babble of confusion.” David is saying, “Lord, I need your intervention because there is violence and strife in the city. There is oppression and deceit in our streets, iniquity and trouble and destruction are walking around on the wall.”

There was a breakdown of civil authority, if you will, as we often see when countries descend into civil war. That seems to be what David is describing here or something like it. But the worst thing for David was not the betrayal of the faceless crowd, but the betrayal of one who was dear to him.

Verse 12.

For it is not an enemy who reproaches me; Then I could bear it. Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me; Then I could hide from him. But it was you, a man my equal, My companion and my acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, And walked to the house of God in the throng.¹¹

If this psalm does, indeed, describe the insurrection that is recorded for us in 2 Samuel 15, David could be referring here to his own son Absalom, or to his trusted counselor Ahithophel.

2 Samuel 15 says, “Then someone told David, saying, ‘Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom.’ And David said, ‘O LORD, I pray, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness!’”¹²

In other words, “Confuse their tongues. Divide their tongues, oh Lord.”

Christian, you probably know this. But the most severe trials that you are going to face in this life will probably not be car problems or house problems, roof problems or health problems. Your most severe trials will probably be people problems, anger, misunderstanding, jealousy, impatience, envy, insensitivity, indifference, betrayal, hatred, bitterness.

And those who have the greatest capacity to hurt you are the people who are closest to you, your close friends, your family.

As David left Jerusalem in disgrace you will remember he was cursed by Shimei. Now Shimei was a descendant of Saul. So he thought, “Hah, finally David is getting his due, this usurper.”

¹¹ Psalm 55:12-14.

¹² 2 Samuel 15:31.

And as he saw David and his band of loyal followers leaving the city of Jerusalem, Shimei up on the hills was throwing stones at him and cursing him. But the cursing of that stranger was much easier for David to bare than the betrayal of David's dear friends.

But it was you, a man my equal, My companion and my acquaintance.
We took sweet counsel together, And walked to the house of God in the throng.¹³

David had a spiritual bond with his betrayer. This was no mere business relationship. He was no casual acquaintance. This was a dear friend. And there was an intimate relationship here.

This is why, by the way, adultery is such a horrible thing. It is what makes it so heinous. It was one of the crimes that was to be punished by death in Israel. It is a betrayal of the deepest of human bonds, the very uniting of two people into one.

You see, that was what brought David the greatest anguish of soul. His intimate friend betrayed him.

Verse 15. David speaks as a king justly angered by the wickedness of those rebelling against the God constituted authority.

“Let death seize them; Let them go down alive into hell [or sheol], For wickedness is in their dwellings and among them.”¹⁴

In other words, “May they be destroyed as rebellious Korah and his accomplices.”

He is pleading for justice here. He is pleading that righteousness would triumph, that evil would be punished. And yet as you read 2 Samuel 15 and following you will notice that what did David desire for I Absalom?

He said to his captain Joab, “Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom. And all the people heard when the king gave all the captains charge concerning Absalom.”¹⁵

He desired mercy for Absalom. Not even David's desire for justice on rebels could overcome his abiding love for his son.

Look at verse 16.

As for me, I will call upon God, And the LORD shall save me. Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, And He shall hear my voice.¹⁶

¹³ Psalm 55:13-14.

¹⁴ Psalm 55:15.

¹⁵ 2 Samuel 18:5.

David expresses his ultimate trust in God.

“He has redeemed my soul in peace from the battle that was against me, For there were many against me.”¹⁷

It looks like he is already beginning to experience some of this peace that passes all understanding.

“God will hear, and afflict them, Even He who abides from of old.”¹⁸

David expresses his ultimate trust in his God.

Think about it. His prospects looked rather grim as he walked out of Jerusalem with a small band of loyal followers, his head covered and barefoot. And then Shimei throwing rocks at him and cursing him.

But he trusted in God’s deliverance.

“I will call upon God, And the LORD shall save me.”¹⁹

“He has redeemed my soul in peace.”²⁰

Having cast his burden on the Lord, he is already beginning to experience that peace that God promises.

There was a time, you will remember, when he was restless, moaning in great agony of soul. He describes it for us in the psalm. But he waited on the Lord and his strength was renewed.

Look at verse 19.

“God will hear, and afflict them, Even He who abides from of old. Selah Because they do not change, Therefore they do not fear God.”²¹

That is an interesting sentence.

“Because they do not change, Therefore they do not fear God.”²²

¹⁶ Psalm 55:16-17.

¹⁷ Psalm 55:18.

¹⁸ Psalm 55:19.

¹⁹ Psalm 55:16.

²⁰ Psalm 55:18.

²¹ Psalm 55:19.

²² Ibid.

I think what the verse is saying is that because everything is going along fine for the ungodly, because they are prosperous and successful without any thought of God, they don't think they need God. And, therefore, they don't fear him. Because they do not change, all the things are going as they were...

"I don't worship. I don't pray. I don't think about God. He is not a part of my life and I am fine."

"I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones," said the rich fool in Jesus' parable.

"Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever,"²³ says Psalm 49. "And their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names."²⁴

This is Sukhia Town.

"They call their lands after their own names."²⁵

So when you pray for God to save someone or to sanctify someone, the result may be change.

You see, when they are not changed, then everything continues on and then they don't fear God. But when things start to change for them and the foundations are destroyed, then they begin to look around for some assistance.

When you pray for God to save someone or to sanctify someone, including yourself, the result may be change and they may not necessarily see that change as change for the better.

Look at verse 20.

"He has put forth his hands..."²⁶

Now he turns back his attention back towards that companion and acquaintance who betrayed him.

He has put forth his hands against those who were at peace with him; He has broken his covenant. The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, But war was in his heart; His words were softer than oil, Yet they were drawn swords.²⁷

²³ Psalm 49:11.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Psalm 55:20.

²⁷ Psalm 55:20-21.

In 2 Samuel 17 we read Ahithophel said to Absalom... Now, here. Get the picture. This is David's trusted counselor and close friend, companion.

Ahithophel has now sided with Absalom in this rebellion. Why? We don't know. Probably just going where the wind is blowing. And he is siding with Absalom and here is his counsel.

Moreover Ahithophel said to Absalom, "Now let me choose twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue David tonight. I will come upon him while he is weary and weak, and make him afraid. And all the people who are with him will flee, and I will strike only the king. Then I will bring back all the people to you. When all return except the man whom you seek, all the people will be at peace." And the saying pleased Absalom and all the elders of Israel.²⁸

Think about this. What treachery, what villainy? The man whom you seek, well, he won't be coming back. Well, the man whom you seek, that is his father. That is Absalom's father you are talking about. That is God's anointed king you are talking about.

And they are saying, "Please, Absalom."

"Yeah, that's good. Just kill my father and then all the people will come and rally to me."

And this saying pleased not only Absalom, but the saying pleased all the elders of Israel. The elders of Israel, the godly men of Israel. We are talking about regicide and patricide and it pleased Absalom and the elders of Israel. And the counsel was coming from David's own dear friend and counselor.

And if this is what David is writing about here in Psalm 55 it is no wonder he talks like this. How depraved their hearts and their judgment that they could listen to this counsel of the man who would betray his own dear friend and king for personal gain, apparently, and recommend killing him.

And what kind of people would follow a son so wicked that he would not only seek to dethrone his father, but be pleased with the counsel that his father be killed?

He has broken his covenant. His words were smoother than butter, softer than oil, but war was in his heart.

And David ends this psalm by calling upon others to cast their burdens on the Lord.

Verse 22.

²⁸ 2 Samuel 17:1-4.

“Cast your burden on the LORD, And He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved.”²⁹

In other words, the righteous man will be like that tree, psalm one, planted by the rivers or water. Its roots will go down deep into those rivers.

It is odd that David can say, isn't it somewhat odd that David can say in the midst of this great trial, whatever it is, that the righteous will never be moved? And yet he is talking about that deep abiding faith in God that sustains us through whatever the trial is.

The bows of the tree may bend with the storm, but its roots will stay deep and strong.

He finally contrasts the righteous with the wicked in verse 23.

“But You, O God, shall bring them down to the pit of destruction; Bloodthirsty and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; But I will trust in You.”³⁰

Also like Psalm one. The contrast between the chaff and the wheat.

“The ungodly are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind drives away.”³¹

They that live by the sword shall die by the sword. In the net that they hide their own foot will be taken. But I, David says, “I will trust in you.”

You know, he is putting that stone down, that stone of help. He is reminding himself of God's faithfulness to him in year's past and he is saying, “I don't care what happens, God, I am going to trust you.”

Now, let me attempt to drive home just a few lessons to our hearts from this psalm.

First of all, perhaps most importantly at least as I read this psalm, most importantly here, Christian, the fact that you have repented of your sins and put your faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior will not preserve you from horrendous heartache and pain and anguish and fear and horror and trouble and oppression and hatred and the terrors of death. Faith in Christ will not preserve you from such things. Faith in Christ will sustain you in such things.

And then Christian surgeon Dr. C Everett Koop, do you know, was instrumental in saving the lives of countless children, innumerable children who were facing immanent death. But his own son David was killed at the age of 20 while mountain climbing in New Hampshire. David's Bible was found open to the tiny book of Jude which was evidentially the last passage he read which reads in verse 24.

²⁹ Psalm 55:22.

³⁰ Psalm 55:23.

³¹ Psalm 1:4.

“[God] is able to keep you from falling.”³²

Edith Schaeffer writes, “God was able to keep him from physically falling. How then could he fall? Impossible. Why?” she says.

You may remember Joe Stole’s account of the Willis family of Chicago. Stole opens his book called *Eternity* with their story. This godly home schooling couple—I have mentioned this story before—Scott and Janet Willis piled six of their nine children in their brand new van to go visit an older child. Traveling north on an interstate, a large piece of metal fell from a truck in front of them, pierced the underside of their car. Their gas tank blew up. They rolled out of the van on fire, rolling around in the grass, Scott and Janet. They turned back to find all six of their children still entombed in this van, all six children who were with them.

They did what they could to fight away the flames, but five of those kids died that day. The sixth child died the next morning in the hospital.

This was a godly home schooling, God fearing family that the father was a part time minister. Such stories could be multiplied over and over. For every Christian whose remarkably delivered from accidents or disease or severe heartache, there are others like Scott and Janet Willis whose hearts are severely pained, who have been overwhelmed with horror and upon whom the terrors of death have fallen.

If you have come to Christ because you were told that in him life would be all sweetness and light, you have been sold a bill of goods. Jesus himself said to his followers, “In the world you shall have tribulation.”³³

David learned it. Joseph learned it. Moses learned it. Elijah learned it. Jeremiah learned it. Daniel learned it. Isaiah learned it. John the Baptist learned it. The apostles learned it. And Job certainly learned it.

Faith in the Lord will not preserve you from trials. But faith in the Lord will sustain you in trials, will sustain you through the trials.

In the case of Scott and Janet Willis, the *Chicago Tribune* ran a front page story about how their faith sustained them through that trial.

“Burned, bandaged and still in physical pain in a Milwaukee area hospital, the couple displayed extraordinary grace and courage Wednesday as they calmly presided over a news conference they had requested to tell of how their unquestioning belief has sustained them through the loss of six of their nine children.

³² Jude 24.

³³ John 16:33.

“At the news conference Scott said, ‘I know God has purposes and God has reasons. God has demonstrated his love to us and our family. There is no question in our mind that God is good and we praise him in all things.’”

But we haven’t attempted to answer the question posed by Edith Schaeffer, the question that most naturally springs to mind when we face horrendous trials or when someone that we love faces horrendous trials or even someone that we know faces horrendous trials. We haven’t tried to answer the question why.

“God, you could have saved my child. Why did you not do so? If he had left five minutes earlier he would have missed that drunk driver. Why? You could have cured my disease? Why did you not do so? You could have prevented that accident? Why did you not do so? You could have prevented that fire, that stroke, that tumor?”

What loving father would treat his child this way? Would a loving father allow his child to suffer that way if it were in his power to prevent it? That is the great question, you see. That is the great question that will arise in your mind and heart if it has not yet already.

Job lost all his possessions, all 10 of his children in one day and God’s response to Job’s plaintiff question why was basically this.

“I am God and you are not.”

Can you tell me how the goats do what the goats do and how the eagles do what the eagles do and what the stars in the heavens?

And he goes on and on for chapters and finally Job just says, “Ok, God. You are God and I am not. I don’t know why you did it and you are not telling me.”

Evidently, our faith, trusting God through the darkness is of exceeding value to God. It is precious. It is priceless.

Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.

Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

She said to Him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."³⁴

After the resurrection, you remember that Jesus appeared to the apostles with Thomas absent. The other disciples said to Thomas, "We have seen the Lord."

Thomas, so evidentially so depressed, so despondent, Thomas said, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."³⁵

As you know:

And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!"

Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing."

And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"

Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."³⁶

You see, God desires your faith.

Peter said, "Now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ."³⁷

Do you hear what Peter is saying? Your faith is much more precious than gold. Even though your faith may be tried by fire, it "may be found to praise and honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love."³⁸

There it is. You haven't seen him, but you love him. That is faith.

"Whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,"³⁹ 1 Peter one.

³⁴ John 11:21-27.

³⁵ John 20:25.

³⁶ John 20:26-29.

³⁷ 1 Peter 1:6-7.

³⁸ 1 Peter 1:7-8.

³⁹ 1 Peter 1:8.

Christian, get this. There is something of more importance than your health, than your wealth, than your very life. And that something is the glory of almighty God. Amen? And God is glorified by his children's faith in him regardless of their circumstances.

Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.⁴⁰

The demon Screwtape writes to his nephew in C S Lewis' *Screwtape Letters*, "Humans, of course, do tend to regard death as the prime evil and survival as the greatest good. But that is because we have taught them to do so," said the demon.

Author James McConkey wrote, "I stood once in the test room of a great steel mill. All around me were little partitions and compartments. Steel had been tested to the limit and marked with figures that showed its breaking point. The master of the steel mill knew just what those pieces of steel would stand under the strain. He knew just what they would bear if placed in the great ship, building or bridge. He knew because the testing room revealed it.

"It is often so with God's children. God does not want us to be as vases of glass or porcelain. He does not want us to be hot house plants, but storm beaten oaks, not sand dunes driven with every wind, but granite rocks withstanding the fiercest storms. To make us such he must bring us into his testing room of suffering."

Some of you are in that testing room right now and you know who you are. Some of you were there in years past. Most of you, if not all of us, will be there one day. And when that day comes heed these words.

Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.⁴¹

The second great lesson from this passage, quickly. This passage leads us to one more truth—this passage that we have just read, actually, I meant to say—leads us to this other great truth, this passage from 1 Peter about partaking with Christ's sufferings.

Did you notice the parallels between what David experienced and what the Lord Jesus experienced as we read through this psalm? Did it jump out at you? The parallels between what David experienced and what the Lord Jesus experienced. Both were rejected as king by the people they loved.

⁴⁰ Daniel 3:17-18.

⁴¹ 1 Peter 4:12-13.

“We have no king but Caesar.”⁴²

Both were betrayed by a friend and companion.

“Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?”⁴³

Both Judas and Ahithophel took their own lives afterwards. Both Jesus and David saw deceit and guile in the city. Both endured the hatred and oppression of the wicked. Both were renounced and betrayed by the elders of Israel. Both desired a way out. David sought to fly away. The Lord Jesus prayed, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me;’ nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.”⁴⁴

Both trusted God to save them.

“But You, O LORD, do not be far from Me; O My Strength, hasten to help Me!”⁴⁵ Psalm 22.

“Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.”⁴⁶

And King David in his sufferings was merely a picture of the future sufferings of the Lamb of God.

The great difference, of course, is that David as a sinner, defiled in heart and soul, fully deserved all the suffering that he endured and more so. He fully deserved all the suffering that he endured and more so.

The Lord Jesus was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, the sinless, spotless, Lamb of God. Why would God the Father treat his own dear Son that way?

And the answer is, of course, that you and I might be forgiven.

“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”⁴⁷

That is why he did it.

Friend, do you see it? You are the Absalom. You are Absalom. You have rebelled against your God. You are the rebellious son. You don’t want another king to rule over you, not even your own father. But your Father loves you still. And so he asks you to

⁴² John 19:15.

⁴³ Luke 22:48.

⁴⁴ Matthew 26:39.

⁴⁵ Psalm 22:19.

⁴⁶ Luke 23:46.

⁴⁷ 2 Corinthians 5:21.

end the insurrection. That is what he says to the non believer. End the insurrection. Throw down your weapons.

“Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.”⁴⁸

He wants you to come. “Come to me,” he said.

Plead for his mercy.

You say, “I don’t know. What are you talking about? How do I do that? What are you saying?”

I am saying this. You come to God. You can do it right now where you are. And you say to him, “God, I am a sinner and I know it. I know my pride. I know my selfishness. I know my hatred, my anger, my bitterness, whatever it may be.”

Whatever comes first to your mind, acknowledge it. Confess it and realize that just one sin is enough to keep you out of the presence of a holy God who is of purer eyes than to behold evil, who cannot look upon iniquity. You come to God and you say to him, “God, I am a sinner and I deserve your wrath and I know it and I can’t save myself. Even if I could be perfect from now until the time I die—and I can’t—I can’t undo the sins I have already committed. God, I need a Savior and I believe that Jesus Christ lived that perfect life, died on the cross as my substitute, rose again from the dead and your Word says if I believe and if I trust and if I transfer my faith from myself to him, all my sins will be forgiven and I will have eternal life.”

That is how a person is saved. That is how you can know that your sins are forgiven. You simply come to God. And you don’t have to get all dressed up and you don’t have to use special words. You just confess your sins.

“God, be merciful to me a sinner.”⁴⁹

The thief on the cross, he looked over at Jesus and he said, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.”⁵⁰

He just believed that Jesus was not a sinner and that he was, in fact, the Son of God who didn’t deserve this.

You come to God like that empty handed, on your knees, literally or figuratively. You come to God that way as a little child, not proud of your accomplishments and knowing

⁴⁸ Isaiah 1:18.

⁴⁹ Luke 18:13.

⁵⁰ Luke 23:42.

that you have sinned against him and knowing that without his mercy, you will perish. You come to God like that.

And he says, "I will forgive. I will give you this gift of everlasting life."

Friend, won't you come to him even today? You come to God that way, you can be assured, he will give ear to your prayer. He will not hide himself from your supplication. You call upon the Lord, the Lord will save you. He will redeem your soul in peace from the battle. Cast your burden on the Lord and he will sustain you.

Let's pray.

Father, how we thank you for David and his life and what we can learn from it. And, oh Lord, how we thank you for a psalm that doesn't mince words, but a psalm that clearly reveals the agony of soul that even believers sometimes experience. So, Lord, when it comes, as it may indeed come, to any here, may we, Father, not be blown about, may we not be shaken, but may our roots be deep in your Word and may we not be surprised or think it strange. Jesus said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." But he also said, "Be of good cheer. I have overcome the world."

In his glorious name we pray. Amen.