



PRAYER SERVICE WEDNESDAY, JUNE 30TH, 2021

Join us at 7pm in the Sanctuary or on [Facebook](#) and use this guide to pray along with us.

• **INTRO**

Welcome to Prayer Service! Have you ever seen a package labelled, “handle with care”? Usually it contains something fragile, or something that, if mishandled, could be harmful to you or those around you. There are plenty of passages in Scripture that could be labeled, “handle with care,” including the Psalm we’re reading tonight. This prayer contains some powerful and challenging thoughts that, if applied universally, haphazardly, or without a wider understanding of the Bible, could do some real damage or lead us to unfaithful conclusions. Psalm 38, attributed to king David, is a prayer of confession and a petition for deliverance from a grave and painful illness. Reading through the Psalms can mirror experience to the journey of life: one moment, you’re on the mountain top, giving praise and thanks; turn the page, and you’re suddenly in the valley of affliction and lament. Circumstances can change so quickly, and life is an ongoing journey, a *walk* of faith. Psalms like these remind us of God’s presence with us in the deepest valleys as well as the greatest mountaintops. They give us language to pray in the disorienting, excruciating times of heartache and pain—which tend to be the hardest seasons *to pray*. We’d do well to press in to the challenges of this Psalm and seek God’s wisdom in the Word. *Let’s pray.*

• **PAUSE**

“As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to re-center my scattered senses upon the presence of God.” (Pete Greig, Lectio365)

“Jesus, I give everything and everyone to you. I give everything and everyone to you, God.”
(John Eldredge, Daily Pause)

Pause and pray.

As we read **Psalm 38** together, be open with the parts that confuse or challenge you; meditate on the parts that stand out to you:

¹ LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath. ² Your arrows have pierced me, and your hand has come down on me. ³ Because of your wrath there is no health in my body; there is no soundness in my bones because of my sin. ⁴ My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear. ⁵ My wounds fester and are loathsome because of my sinful folly. ⁶ I am bowed down and brought very low; all day long I go about mourning. ⁷ My back is filled with searing pain; there is no health in my body. ⁸ I am feeble and utterly crushed; I groan in anguish of heart. ⁹ All my longings lie open before you, Lord; my sighing is not hidden from you. ¹⁰ My heart pounds, my strength fails me; even the light has gone from my eyes. ¹¹ My friends and companions avoid me because of my wounds; my neighbors stay far away. ¹² Those who want to kill me set their traps, those who would harm me talk of my ruin; all day long they scheme and lie. ¹³ I am like the deaf, who cannot hear, like the mute, who cannot speak; ¹⁴ I have become like one who does not hear, whose mouth can offer no reply. ¹⁵ LORD, I wait for you; you will answer, Lord my God. ¹⁶ For I said, “Do not let them gloat or exalt themselves over me when my feet slip.” ¹⁷ For I am about to fall, and my pain is ever with me. ¹⁸ I confess my iniquity; I am troubled by my sin.

19 Many have become my enemies without cause; those who hate me without reason are numerous. 20 Those who repay my good with evil lodge accusations against me, though I seek only to do what is good. 21 LORD, do not forsake me; do not be far from me, my God. 22 Come quickly to help me, my Lord and my Savior.

- **SONG**

“New Wine”

VERSE

In the crushing in the pressing
You are making new wine
In the soil I now surrender
You are breaking new ground
(You are breaking new ground)

(God) I came here with nothing
But all You have given me
Jesus bring new wine out of me

TAG

Jesus bring new wine out of me
Jesus bring new wine out of me

PRE-CHORUS

So I yield to You and to Your careful hand
When I trust You I don't need to understand

BRIDGE

'Cause where there is new wine
There is new power
There is new freedom
And the kingdom is here
I lay down my old flames
To carry Your new fire today

CHORUS

(So) Make me Your vessel
Make me an offering
Make me whatever You want me to be

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- **PSALM 38:1-8**

1 LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath. 2 Your arrows have pierced me, and your hand has come down on me. 3 Because of your wrath there is no health in my body; there is no soundness in my bones because of my sin. 4 My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear. 5 My wounds fester and are loathsome because of my sinful folly. 6 I am bowed down and brought very low; all day long I go about mourning. 7 My back is filled with searing pain; there is no health in my body. 8 I am feeble and utterly crushed; I groan in anguish of heart.

Wow. It's pretty incredible to think that both Psalm 23 (you know, *“the Lord is my shepherd,”*) and this prayer are attributed to the same author, king David! The journey of life is seldom predictable or linear. It's often quite complicated. The one constant, as the Psalms remind us, is God's faithful love. But where does that *faithful love* fit into a prayer that opens with the words, *“...do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath...”*? The prayer seems to make the connection between the sin of the psalmist and the affliction they're experiencing, as a punishment or discipline from God. It's not the only place in the Old Testament or New Testament that does so. But it would be a grave mistake to assume that every instance of affliction is the *direct result* or punishment of a person's sin—not only does the Bible never state this, but it explicitly challenges making that blanket assumption (the entire book of Job in the Old Testament and Jesus' healing of the man born blind in John 9:1-3 are two powerful examples).

So, what can we do with this Psalm? First, if we're going to take the whole Bible seriously, let's just accept the fact that, as hard as it is to stomach with our modern sensibilities, God is holy, just, and good, and God does at times bring discipline to his children for the sake of correction and God does

at times bring judgement in this world—precisely because he *is* perfectly good and intends the *best* for his creation. God opposes sin and evil because it distorts his good creation, which God loves with all the passion of a consuming fire. At the same time, the Bible makes very clear that just because you suffer does not mean you are being punished. Even Jesus, the *sinless one*, suffered. *Suffering* is a given in this fallen world. Whatever situation we're in, we are in constant need of God's forgiveness and healing. We do not need to add the burden of fear and guilt to the already heavy burden of affliction. We need to trust that, if our hearts are truly open to God, he will show us exactly what we need to do in any given situation: whether we need repentance, redirection, renewed faith, or simply perseverance until the storm has passed.

The reality is, suffering happens. And while in many instances, it may not be the direct result of some mistake we've made, we sometimes feel like the Psalmist at those times: we *feel* as if we're being punished, we *feel* as if we're being abandoned, we *feel* as if we're being pierced by arrows. That in itself can make a prayer like this helpful in times of desperate struggle. But God's perfect love will never fail us. He desires our highest good and will do whatever it takes to bring us there. This prayer can help us bring all the pain and confusion of suffering, in our lives and the lives of others, before God's sovereign love. Where are you at? Do you need forgiveness? Healing? Reassurance? Wisdom? Bring your heart before God and ask for what you need. *Pause and pray.*

- **PSALM 38:**

⁹ All my longings lie open before you, Lord; my sighing is not hidden from you. ¹⁰ My heart pounds, my strength fails me; even the light has gone from my eyes. ¹¹ My friends and companions avoid me because of my wounds; my neighbors stay far away. ¹² Those who want to kill me set their traps, those who would harm me talk of my ruin; all day long they scheme and lie. ¹³ I am like the deaf, who cannot hear, like the mute, who cannot speak; ¹⁴ I have become like one who does not hear, whose mouth can offer no reply.

Now that we've worked through some of the more theological challenges of this passage, we can think a little more about the way it opens up the human experience of suffering. Another good thing this Psalm can do for us is to bring us in touch with the reality of suffering: if we're in a relatively peaceful season, it can be easy to insulate ourselves from the pain of others and shrink our capacity for compassion, empathy, and therefore, prayer. The powerful language of this Psalm reminds us that suffering has many dimensions, which is why it can be so brutal to experience: when someone is afflicted by profound sickness, injury, or loss, it affects the *entire person*. It affects us physically, emotionally, relationally, and spiritually. Have you or someone you love been through a major sickness, injury, or loss? Is it happening right now? Can you think of someone, yourself included, for whom this would be relevant? Pray for the people and situations that come to mind, and allow the poignancy of these words to open your heart more deeply to the love of Christ. *Pause and pray.*

- **PSALM 38:15-21**

¹⁵ LORD, I wait for you; you will answer, Lord my God. ¹⁶ For I said, "Do not let them gloat or exalt themselves over me when my feet slip." ¹⁷ For I am about to fall, and my pain is ever with me. ¹⁸ I confess my iniquity; I am troubled by my sin. ¹⁹ Many have become my enemies without cause; those who hate me without reason are numerous. ²⁰ Those who repay my good with evil lodge accusations against me, though I seek only to do what is good. ²¹ LORD, do not forsake me; do not be far from me, my God. ²² Come quickly to help me, my Lord and my Savior.

It's interesting to note that, although the Psalmist feels that this affliction is the result of his sin being punished by God, nowhere in this prayer does he question God's love and faithfulness. In fact, after all the description of this multifaceted suffering, he prays, "*Lord, I wait for you; you will answer, Lord my God...do not forsake me; do not be far from me, my God. Come quickly to help me, my Lord and*

my Savior.” This is a peculiar reality of the life of holiness: when storms arrive, when suffering comes, where once it would have pulled us away and hindered our trust, pain can actually become something that drives us to pursue God even more and draws us even deeper into God’s heart. May all of our hearts come to this place; that, when faced with disappointment, pain, and loss, we would not run from God, but run after him all the more, knowing our desperate need that only he can meet. Do we trust God like that yet? There’s no need to fret or feel ashamed about it. If we trust Christ, he’ll get us there. Ask God to deepen you trust and surrender in every season. *Pause and pray.*

- **SONG**

“How Firm A Foundation”

VERSE 1

How firm a foundation ye saints of the Lord
Is laid for your faith in His excellent word
What more can He say than to you He hath
said
To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled

VERSE 2

Fear not I am with thee O be not dismayed
For I am thy God I will still give thee aid
I'll strengthen thee help thee
And cause thee to stand
Upheld by My gracious omnipotent hand

VERSE 3

When through the deep waters He calls thee to
go

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The rivers of grief shall not thee overflow
For He will be with thee in trouble to bless
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress

VERSE 4

When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie
My grace all-sufficient shall be thy supply
The flames shall not hurt thee I only design
Thy dross to consume and thy gold to refine

VERSE 5

The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose
I will not I will not desert to its foes
That soul though all hell should endeavor to
shake
I'll never no never no never forsake

“One Thing Remains”

VERSE 1

Higher than the mountains that I face
Stronger than the power of the grave
Constant in the trial and the change
One thing remains
One thing remains

CHORUS

Your love never fails
It never gives up
Never runs out on me
Your love

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- **Closing**

“Father, help me to live this day to the full, being true to you in every way. Jesus, help me to give myself away to others, being kind to everyone I meet. Spirit, help me to love the lost, proclaiming Christ in all I do and say. Amen.” (Pete Greig, Lectio365)

VERSE 2

On and on and on and on it goes
It overwhelms and satisfies my soul
And I never ever have to be afraid
One thing remains
One thing remains

BRIDGE

In death in life I'm confident and
Covered by the power of Your great love
My debt is paid there's nothing that
Can separate my heart from your great love