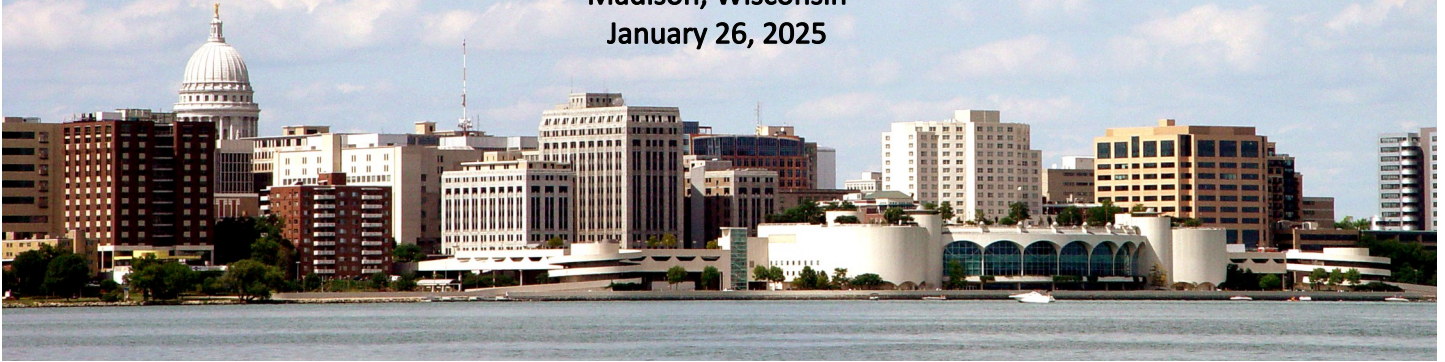


The Sin-Sick Psalm

Psalm 38 – Part 2

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Four Lakes Church of Christ
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Good morning and welcome! It is good to be together this morning, and if you are visiting with us today, we are especially happy to have you with us, and we'd like to ask that you fill out a visitor card – either online or on a card from the pew in front of you. And we also invite you to pass along any questions or prayer concerns in that way.

I enjoyed camping up in Copper Harbor, Michigan, a week or so ago. I also camped in Marquette, Michigan, and at Kohler-Andre State Park over near Sheboygan on my way home. Two weeks ago, I said they had 97.5 inches of snow in Copper Harbor, and it snowed the whole time I was there. There was no point when it wasn't snowing for more than two days straight. So, they got another 12 inches or so while I was there, getting them closer to their yearly average of 270 inches for the season. A year or so ago, sister Nellie made me a hat, and that hat is pictured on the left, by the way. It did a great job of keeping me warm up there. After that quick trip, I came home to pick up my wife, and we made it up to Eau Claire and Marshfield for a few nights, where we were able to check in with the church in Spencer, Wisconsin. The church in Spencer is the church now responsible for Beaver Creek Bible Camp, and they were in their old auditorium for the last time. They are more than doubling the size of their building with what is basically a \$1 million addition that is completely paid for. One of my old Freed-Hardeman buddies serves as one of their three shepherds (he's pictured on the left up here), and it was good to reconnect with him and everybody else up in Spencer.

Before we get to the best of all news, I wanted to share two bits of good news that may be somewhat unusual, and I want to start with a post from Chris McCurley, a friend who preaches at the Walnut Street congregation down in Dickson, Tennessee. I thought some of you might appreciate this, but he posted back in October, actually, and says this, "I preached a sermon a while back on idolatry. One of the lessons in that series focused on the idol of entertainment. I opened that message by stating that I had a dream that Sunday mornings would one day resemble a college football atmosphere – people getting to the venue extra early, tailgating, anticipating being together and being excited about worship. Well, this morning some guys made my dream a reality. We got to the building early, we tailgated in the parking lot and it was awesome!" And then he says, "Go TEAM WALNUT STREET!" I just love the spirit and the enthusiasm behind that, and it reminded me of King David's mighty men. When David had been expelled from his own capital city, he made a passing comment about how he really missed drinking water from the well back in Jerusalem, and unbeknownst to King David, several of his mighty men geared up for a top secret commando mission behind enemy lines and brought back

some water from that well. David, of course, considered that water too precious to drink and poured it out as an offering before the Lord. But I just thought of that when I read about what these men did for their preacher down in Tennessee several months ago.

And this second post comes to us from Melvin Otey, a friend and brother who is also a law professor at Faulkner University down in Alabama. He also preaches at the Perry Hill Road congregation. Brother Melvin is on the left up here, and he posted a few weeks ago saying that “Johnny [on the right] has his own ministry for the Lord. No one assigned him the duty. He stands outside our church building each morning and holds edifying and inspiring messages for thousands of commuters. Many don’t know his name, but they know his encouragement. People honk and wave as he blesses them to start their days. This photo shows him holding a sign earlier this week, inviting members of our community to join us for worship this Sunday. Please join Johnny and the family at Perry Hill Road church of Christ tomorrow as we try to get the new year started on the right foot, (re)dedicating ourselves to the Lord and fellowship with his people. We’d love to have you!” I just love this, and I hope you do as well! I love the beard, but I also love the enthusiasm. And if anybody would like to stand out here on Acewood with a sign every morning, I would be glad to help with the signage.

But now, for the best news of all! We have come together this morning to preach the good news that Jesus came to this earth and died for our sins, he was buried, and he was raised up on the first day of the week. We obey the good news by believing it, by turning away from sin, by publicly confessing our faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and by allowing ourselves to be buried with Jesus in baptism, a burial in water for the forgiveness of sins. And, as usual, we do have several examples to share this week, starting with an update from the Bridge Avenue congregation in Weslaco, Texas. They posted a few weeks ago, and they say that, “Javier Reyna and Lizbeth Luna decided today is the day to put on Christ in baptism! The angels in heaven rejoice with us! Welcome our new brother and sister in the Lord! Javier and Lizbeth learned about the church by watching our Facebook Livestream. They observed that we are a faithful, Bible-based church and decided to come by for a visit this past Summer. They have been attending ever since. This young couple is engaged to be married and will be starting their pre-marital counseling soon. Please keep them in prayer as they begin their new life in Christ and prepare for marriage!” That is awesome!

This next one comes to us from the Lord’s church meeting in Lviv, Ukraine. They say that, “God continues to bless us with growth! Today, Lydia Oleksiivna has made a covenant with God and was baptized for the forgiveness of her sins! This marks the first baptism of 2025, and we are overjoyed to begin the year with such a wonderful news. Join us in celebrating and welcoming our new sister in Christ!” Good to see it!

We have so many we could share today, but I’ll just share one more. The congregation in Riverton, Wyoming, welcomes “...Brian & Peggy into the family of Christ today through baptism! The warm water at Hot Springs State Park gave a beautiful opportunity!” And as a bonus, I have now added this place as a favorite in my Google map! But, good news from Wyoming this week, and we share these pictures as our invitation to you to obey the gospel just as these people have done. If we can help in any way, if you’d like to study together, please let us know. Pull me aside after worship, or give me a call or send a text to 608-224-0274.

This morning we are returning to our brief series of two lessons from Psalm 38 (p. 891), and as you are making your way to Psalm 38, I would remind you by way of very brief review that the heading on this Psalm (in the NASB, at least) describes this particular Psalm as the “Prayer of a Suffering Penitent.” Two weeks ago, then, we noted that the word “penitent” goes back to Latin, and it refers to “a person who repents of their sins and seeks God’s forgiveness.” And the word should be familiar to us, because we see it in the English word “penitentiary.” A penitentiary, of course, is a prison, but it goes back to this idea of repenting. A penitentiary is a place where people are confined, a place where people may suffer, as they hopefully use that time of

confinement to think about what they have done and hopefully come to a point where they have a change of mind resulting in a change of behavior (that's the goal anyway). A penitentiary is a place of repentance. I shared some pictures from our visit to the West Virginia State Penitentiary, and we noted that not all of us have been to prison, but most of us understand what it means to live with a sense of regret. We know what it means to sin, and then to suffer as a result of that sin, and then to languish in that condition over time. Maybe there's something we've done that we wish we could take back, but we can't. Or maybe there's something we've done that broke or damaged a relationship, and it hangs over us. Perhaps there's a page from our history we wish we could tear out and get rid of altogether.

Two weeks ago, then, as we thought about this idea of suffering as a result of something we've done, we started taking a look at Psalm 38, a psalm that was written by King David. And this is one of many reasons we love the psalms. The book of Psalms is a songbook, and like the songbooks we have in our pews this morning, some of the songs are psalms of praise and thanksgiving, but there are also songs of lament, songs expressing the pain of regret. And that's what we find in Psalm 38. But there is a value to it, because psalms like this one teach us how react in times of great sorrow. Psalms like this remind us to *"humble ourselves in the presence of the Lord."*

We don't know the details, but in response to something he's done, King David is suffering the consequences. In verses 1-4, he's suffering THE WEIGHT OF A GUILTY CONSCIENCE BEFORE THE LORD. In verses 5-7, he's suffering PHYSICALLY. In verses 8-10, he's suffering MENTALLY AND EMOTIONALLY. And in verses 11-12, he's suffering the pain of ISOLATION AND REJECTION. We then had the two very practical applications: First of all, sin has consequences, and secondly, worship is not just for the good times. Today, though, we move to the rest of Psalm 38, as we note David's RESPONSE to what he's going through here. But before we go any further, let's go back and look at the text itself. Let's look together at all 22 verses of Psalm 38,

- ¹ *O Lord, rebuke me not in Your wrath,
And chasten me not in Your burning anger.*
- ² *For Your arrows have sunk deep into me,
And Your hand has pressed down on me.*
- ³ *There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your indignation;
There is no health in my bones because of my sin.*
- ⁴ *For my iniquities are gone over my head;
As a heavy burden they weigh too much for me.*
- ⁵ *My wounds grow foul and fester
Because of my folly.*
- ⁶ *I am bent over and greatly bowed down;
I go mourning all day long.*
- ⁷ *For my loins are filled with burning,
And there is no soundness in my flesh.*
- ⁸ *I am benumbed and badly crushed;
I groan because of the agitation of my heart.*
- ⁹ *Lord, all my desire is before You;
And my sighing is not hidden from You.*
- ¹⁰ *My heart throbs, my strength fails me;
And the light of my eyes, even that has gone from me.*
- ¹¹ *My loved ones and my friends stand aloof from my plague;
And my kinsmen stand afar off.*
- ¹² *Those who seek my life lay snares for me;*

*And those who seek to injure me have threatened destruction,
And they devise treachery all day long.*

¹³ *But I, like a deaf man, do not hear;
And I am like a mute man who does not open his mouth.*

¹⁴ *Yes, I am like a man who does not hear,
And in whose mouth are no arguments.*

¹⁵ *For I hope in You, O Lord;
You will answer, O Lord my God.*

¹⁶ *For I said, "May they not rejoice over me,
Who, when my foot slips, would magnify themselves against me."*

¹⁷ *For I am ready to fall,
And my sorrow is continually before me.*

¹⁸ *For I confess my iniquity;
I am full of anxiety because of my sin.*

¹⁹ *But my enemies are vigorous and strong,
And many are those who hate me wrongfully.*

²⁰ *And those who repay evil for good,
They oppose me, because I follow what is good.*

²¹ *Do not forsake me, O Lord;
O my God, do not be far from me!*

²² *Make haste to help me,
O Lord, my salvation!*

This morning, let's focus on the second half of Psalm 38 as we learn from King David's REACTION to what he's going through here.

I. **And we start in verses 13-17, as David responds to suffering the consequences of his sin by QUIETLY WAITING FOR GOD.**

In the verses leading up to this, King David is being accused and attacked, but David responds, first of all, by not responding! He's quiet before the Lord. I'm thinking of that passage in James 1 that is often yanked out of context, where James says (in James 1:19) that we must be *"quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger."* We often hear this applied to interpersonal relationships, "We need to listen to each other," and so on. But that's not what James is saying. In context, James is talking about the word of God. In context, James talks about being *"brought forth by the word of truth."* This we know, he says, that everyone *"must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger,"* and then he explains that *"the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God,"* and then he says that we must put aside sin and *"in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save our souls...proving ourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves."* In context, then, James is saying that we must be quick to hear what God has said in his word, we must be slow to speak in God's presence, and we must be slow to get angry with what God has said. And I think that's what King David is doing here. He knows he's suffering for what he's done, and in response, he is quiet in God's presence.

He's done wrong, he's suffering for it, what more can be said? There's no justification for what he's done. He hears the accusations from his enemies, but there's no excuse. And so, he is silent before the Lord. He allows

this time to be shaped by what is happening here. This is a time for King David to learn and to grow. King David, who always had something to sing or to say is silent.

I'm thinking of that time in 2 Samuel 16, when Absalom had taken the kingdom, and David was fleeing Jerusalem, and there was this guy name Shimei, a descendant of Saul, following along a ridge, yelling and cursing King David on his way out, and even throwing stones. One of David's men basically says, "Hey, let me kill this dog." However, David has his men stand down, because there was some truth in what this man was saying. He was accusing King David of being a man of bloodshed, that David deserved getting removed as king. And David continues on in silence, without offering a defense. And to me, that's almost what we see here. His enemies accuse, and David is silent before the Lord, entrusting his judgment to God. In verse 15, ***"For...you will answer, O Lord my God."*** We just studied an interesting verse in our Bible class this morning. In Nehemiah 5:8, Nehemiah had just confronted the wealthy leaders over their abuse of the poor, and the text says, ***"Then they were silent and could not find a word to say."*** Like David, they were speechless. And the practical application of this is that if we are guilty, there is no need to make excuses. A few weeks ago, we stumbled upon a show on Amazon Prime, The Sheriffs of Eldorado County, the county adjoining Lake Tahoe. And I've noticed a few things watching that show over the past few days. First of all, probably 90% of all calls are either as a direct result of alcohol or were made much worse due to the influence of alcohol. And secondly, talking usually makes it worse. When somebody is clearly guilty, talking almost always makes it worse! I have a friend who was pulled over for speeding years ago, and his response to the officer was, "Yes, was speeding. I am guilty." The officer was completely shocked by that. It was a first, and I believe he let my friend off with a warning. Often, though, talking and arguing and making excuses will make things much worse. David, then, is silent before the Lord.

II. This brings us to a second aspect of David's response, because in verses 18-20 we find that after that initial period of silence, King David CONFESSES HIS SINS TO GOD.

Most of us know that we would much rather NOT admit what we've done, but King David suffers the consequences of his sin, and after that initial moment of silence, he ultimately talks to God about it. He speaks, he sings, he opens his heart to God. We learn, then, that there is a value to confession. On one hand, we confess our sins to the Lord. Our English word "confess" goes back to a Latin word meaning "to speak alongside, or together; to speak the same thing." The translators have used this word to translate a Hebrew word meaning "conspicuous." And so, the idea is that in his word, God tells us that we have sinned when we do this thing, and when we confess, we admit it, we agree with the Lord, "Yes, I have done this." And that's what David does here, "Yes, Lord, I am guilty." This is very much parallel to Psalm 51:3-4, where David says, ***"For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You are justified when You speak and blameless when You judge."*** David confesses his sin before the Lord; he admits what he's done. And we would do well to do the same. As James says in James 5:16, ***"Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed."*** When we hurt somebody, when we sin in a way that affects those around us, we must confess what we've done. We have to admit it.

In a sense, though, confession is dangerous, isn't it? When we confess, we admit that we need help; we admit that we have some issues; we admit that we've messed up. And it can be hard to confess, because we open ourselves up to criticism; maybe our enemies will use it against us. But David, though, confesses anyway. This is between David and God, and David needs help. By the way, by covering it up at first (or by trying to, anyway), David actually made things much worse, didn't he? We think of David's sin with Bathsheba. It was terrible what he did to that woman, and yet as bad as that was, the cover-up was even worse than the original sin. And I think of the leaders we've had here in the United States over the past 30 or 40 years. Couldn't we

say the same? Think of the major failings of every president over the past several decades. In almost every case, the cover-up was much worse than the original transgression. So also with Adam and Eve, so also with David, and so also with us. Healing starts with confession, and that's what David does here, *"I confess my iniquity."*

III. This brings us to the last two verses, where we find that King David responds to his sin by CALLING OUT TO GOD FOR HELP.

So, instead of running AWAY from God (like Adam and Eve tried to do when they sinned), King David runs TO God. When we sin, we leave God; he doesn't leave us; and so it's up to us to return. In Zechariah 1:3, God says, *"Return to Me, and I will return to you."* And that's what we see here as King David calls out to God for help. And in these last two verses, by the way, David uses three different words for God: YAHWEH (the God David knows by name), ELOHIM (the God David knows from Creation), and ADONAI (the God David knows as Lord and Master). David calls out to God for help, because he knows that God is merciful. Going back to Exodus 34:6-7, *"The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin."* David knows that he is safe confessing his sin to God, and so are we, because God is merciful to those who call out to him for help.

Conclusion:

This brings us to the end of Psalm 38, and here at the end, as we ask ourselves what this Psalm really means for us today, we need to answer the "So what?" question, and I think the answer to the "So what?" question is that THERE IS A VALUE TO SUFFERING AS A CONSEQUENCE OF SIN, IF WE RESPOND APPROPRIATELY. Let's start with the first part of this. Again, not all suffering is the direct consequence of something we've done; however, when we do suffer as a result of something we've done, we have a choice, don't we? We can get bitter and hard and we can stubbornly press forward along that path that caused us to suffer in the first place. Or, on the other hand, we can react as David reacts here. We can remain silent before the Lord, learning from what we've done, we can confess our sin to God, and then we can call out to God for mercy. On one hand, then, we can allow suffering to drive us further from God, or we can submit and allow that suffering to bring us closer to God. So, there may be a benefit to suffering the consequences to sin if we react appropriately. If David had never suffered, he might not have ever returned to the Lord. So, there may be a benefit to suffering for what we've done.

Secondly, though, I would just emphasize again WE HAVE TO REACT APPROPRIATELY. For those who are lost, that's why we emphasize the good news every Lord's Day. Jesus died in our place and came back from the dead, and we respond to that good news by turning to the Lord in faith, we turn away from sin, and we obey Jesus' command to be buried with him in baptism. That's for those who are lost. But let's also realize that those of us who are Christians must also respond appropriately when we sin. We don't need to be baptized again (if we were baptized appropriately the first time), but we do what David does here. He is quiet (not arguing with God about what he'd done), he confesses his sin to God (agreeing with God that what he had done was, in fact, sin), and then he turns to God for help, asking for forgiveness. As John explains in 1 John 1:9, *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* John continues in 1 John 2 by saying, *"My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world."* When we sin, we have an Advocate. That's the word for an attorney. Jesus is willing to argue our case, to defend us before the Father, because he is the *"propitiation"* for our sins. He has paid the price. He is the sacrifice. And

when we think about it, Jesus endured for us everything David brought on himself here. Even though he was innocent, Jesus took on the weight of the guilt of our sin, he took on the physical suffering, he endured the mental and emotional anguish, he endured the isolation and rejection.

In just a moment, Caleb will lead us in a song to help focus our thoughts on what we just studied, but before we sing, let's go to God in prayer:

Our Father in Heaven,

Thank you for hearing our prayer! We know that we have sinned against you, and we know that our sin has some terrible consequences. Sometimes we are completely overwhelmed in grief and regret, and in those moments, we are so thankful that we can come to you with the weight of our sin. This morning, Father, we pray that we would have the wisdom and courage to react to sin appropriately. We hate to suffer the consequences, but we ask for your help as we think about what we've done. We ask for humble hearts that are always willing to confess and to turn to you for help. Forgive us, Father, when we sin.

Thank you, Father, for Jesus. We come to you in his name. AMEN.

To comment on this lesson: fourlakeschurch@gmail.com