

<b>Book</b>	Psalms – Study 11
<b>Topic</b>	Praying Our Sorrow
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1. Introduction to the study of sorrow
2. How do we cope with sorrow
3. Using our sorrow
4. Example of a psalm of Lamentation...Psalm 88

## SORROW:

Sorrow has a very deep dimension. Ell Fitzgerald says,

Every time we say goodbye  
I die a little  
Every time we say goodbye  
I wonder why a little  
Why the Gods above me  
Who must be in the know  
Think so little of me  
They allow you to go

So, separation often is the basis of sorrow. French philosopher Simone Weil says,

*This splitting in two of the soul is a second pain, a spiritual one, and even sharper than the physical pain that causes it.*

So, sorrow has a deeper dimension, within our souls we actually feel. There are a lot of things today that actually compound our sorrow. For example, Facebook. Facebook causes a lot of sorrow, you look down to everybody eating food, enjoying themselves, and we got nothing to post. It is a fact and it gives you a lopsided view and nobody in Facebook ever post something bad about themselves, like sadness, a catastrophe. They only paste a one-sided view of life. So, they feel disappointed when they log onto Facebook because of the apparently perfect life of their peers.

Perhaps, if we told others how unhappy we are, we would probably all be happier in the long run. So actually, if you want to change Facebook, all of you must post some unhappy post. That life suck today. You had this setback and then when people read, they become more realistic. I think Christians should start posting a bit unhappier thing. Then testimonies in church, do you notice all testimonies in church are one-sided. When God heals you, hallelujah. When you get a new job, hallelujah.

Because everything is one-sided, we have this idealized perfect life a Christian has and then when shit hits the fan and when the stuff happens, we cannot cope with it. That's why a lot of people in the church today, especially the new prosperity gospel cannot cope with sadness because they have a one-dimensional view of Christianity. So, we need to look at sorrow and study it. People think that if they study sorrow, they will get sorrow tomorrow. We don't have to look for sorrow, sorrow will find you. There is not a person here who will not be hit by sorrow one day.

Sorrow can lead to grief, which goes to pathological grief and then go to depression. There is a progression if you don't know how to handle your sorrow. It has to be handled as it were. So, we can either express our sorrow, suppress our sorrow or pray our sorrow. These are the only three mechanisms on which we can deal with our sorrow.

### **SUPPRESSION OF SORROW:**

The motto of Windsor family is never explained, never complain. What happened was Diana the mother died many years ago and when she died the kids were not allowed to cry and then later on he exploded and it was 20 years of not thinking about it and 2 years of total chaos. Harry speaks frankly about fighting his demons in the wake of his mother's death. How he finally sought professional help. He got drunk, multiple girlfriends. He even dressed up as a Nazi. He actually broke down at his wedding to Meghan Markle during the playing of his mother's favorite hymn, because that was the part of his memory that have been repressed and these are his words,

*"I can safely say that losing my mum at the age of 12, and therefore shutting down all of my emotions for the last 20 years, has had a quite serious effect on not only my personal life but my work as well," he admitted. "I thought that thinking of her was only going to make me sad and not going to bring her back. So, from an emotional side, I was, like, 'Right, don't ever let your emotions be part of anything.'"*

So, I think if you actually suppress your emotions, 20 years later on it will come out in some form or other in aberrant behavior. So, suppressing your emotion is not a very good thing. Suppression emotion is actually taken from the stoic philosophy of suppression. If we look at the Seneca, for example they don't really suppress. This is what he writes,

*"It is better to conquer our grief than to deceive it. For if it has withdrawn, being merely beguiled by pleasures and preoccupations, it starts up again and from its very respite gains force to savage us. But the grief that has been conquered by reason is calmed for ever"*

So, when you are sad, some people distract you. For example, a child is crying and you take a toy in front of the baby in order to distract the child. It's the same way,

you can distract it or you actually use something else, some pleasurable event, but again if we do that it will come back and bite us. So therefore Seneca says, we need to conquer our grief by reason. Then the strategy is

*That means facing it now. Process and parse what you are feeling. Remove your expectations, your entitlements, your sense of having been wronged. Find the positive in the situation, but also sit with your pain and accept it, remembering that it is a part of life. That's how one conquers grief.*

So how Seneca tells us to conquer grief is that, just tell yourself life sucks, life is supposed to suck, so basically all you have to do to accept it and remember its part of life, that's how you conquer it. This is a very erred way of dealing with this emotion. Seneca wrote a letter to Marcia who had lost her son and this is how he advised her

*"We have entered the kingdom of Fortune, whose rule is harsh and unconquerable, and at her whim we will endure suffering, deserved and undeserved."*

So, he is very sad. He is telling you, you lose your son too bad, everybody also lose son. Then he says on losing a friend,

*"Has it then all been for nothing that you have had such a friend? During so many years, amid such close associations, after such intimate communion of personal interests, has nothing been accomplished? Do you bury friendship along with a friend? And why lament having lost him, if it be of no avail to have possessed him? Believe me, a great part of those we have loved, though chance has removed their persons, still abides with us. The past is ours, and there is nothing more secure for us than that which has been."*

He is saying that when you lose a friend, do not think that what you've had with him is lost. You need to celebrate the time that you have with him and we actually apply that idea in funerals.

*"If you admit to having derived great pleasures, your duty is not to complain about what has been taken away but to be thankful for what you have been given."*

So therefore, if you've got a loved one, who has gone away, you are then to celebrate what you have been given. This does make some sense rather than to mourn the loss as if it was all for not.

## **EXPRESS OUR SORROW:**

Expressing our sorrow, our tears when we cry. You know, we have got all sorts of tears, reflex, continuous and emotional. When you actually cry you express stress hormones and it stimulates production of endorphins. The emotion will clear

sadness and stress, your heartrate and your breathing will decrease as a calmer, biological emotional state and it resolves your grief and we process the loss, so that we can move on.

Psychologists tell you, if you are sad there are ways in which you can cope with it. One is bibliotherapy and cinemetherapy, which is basically read a good book or see a good movie about somebody else who suffered but who conquered the suffering. Then you feel good too. So that's a useful idea. So, we need to express your sorrow through the life of another person. That's another useful tip. That's how you do when you lament.

The Jewish people who were sent off to concentration camp, they expressed their sorrow through songs.

A storm raged through the world,  
Leaving people uprooted and homeless.  
Without pity or sorrow, their world was destroyed.  
The sun was torn from the heavens, and day turned into night. There, not far,  
the Unschlagplatz lies waiting.  
There, people push and shove for space in the railcars.  
There, you hear the sound of a child crying to its mother, "Why are you  
leaving? You will never come back to me!"  
The police roughly shout the order: "Go!"  
"You won't feel a bit hungry. You'll get three loaves of bread!" But with those  
three kilos of bread, they did not know  
That they were being driven to their deaths.

There lies Treblinka;  
For everyone a final resting place.  
Whoever goes there  
Never comes back again.  
The heart weeps when one recalls a sister or a brother  
Who were murdered there.  
The train is here waiting!  
And there's only one thing left to say,  
"That I am for Treblinka!"

A very sad vialing lament but that's how they express their sorrow and deal with their sorrow.

There are other psychological ways. You can control your breathing. Your breathing brings more and more comfort to you. You can notice that your lungs are supporting your brain and more and more oxygen settle deeply into the space of your mind, a mindful relaxation and exploration. Go now to your heart and feel the

pain, emptiness, or sadness. Breathe deeply and bring mindful awareness to the suffering within your heart.

This is basically gibberish, it doesn't make any sense. But that's how some people deal with it.

## USING OUR SORROW"

Sorrow can be used. If you look at Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, who was a great musician. He actually used his sadness. His cyclical lapses into depression, undergirded by a dogged dedication to looking for beauty and meaning amid the spiritual wreckage. This intimate tango of sadness and radiance is ultimately what gives his music its timeless edge in penetrating the soul.

So actually you find a lot of song writers, they actually use sorrow. Most of the great songs in the world are written during the time of great sorrow. So, you actually learn to use your sorrow for creative uses. Khalil Gibran was supposed to be the third best selling poet of all time, who was very famous for this saying,

*If you love somebody, let them go, for they return, they were always yours. If they don't, they never were."*

He actually wrote this which is very nice,

*"Your joy is your sorrow unmasked. And the self same well from which your laughter rises was oftentimes filled with your tears. And how else can it be? The deeper that sorrow carves into your being, the more joy you can contain. "When we feel sadness, cry our tears and share our sorrows with others, our degree of attachment fades and something wonderful starts to happen. Our minds clear of bewilderment and confusion. Happy memories and connections are revived. Doubts and anxieties settle and, with acceptance of the new situation, anger subsides. Cleansed of shame and guilt, we are left calmer than before, more assured, with a greater sense of innocence and a self-worth Personal growth brings maturity as sorrow turns spontaneously to joy. Less fearful of loss in the future, we can live more spontaneously, with a greater sense of liberty and equanimity.*

What he is saying, sorrow isn't necessarily bad. It is from the same well you experience sorrow. When you actually bounce up, you actually experience joy.

## PRAYING YOUR SORROW:

Psalms 126 (ESV) When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream. 2 Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then they said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them."

This refers to the exile. When Israel comes back from the exile, God brings them back but what happens

3 The Lord has done great things for us; we are glad. 4 Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like streams in the Negeb! 5 Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy! 6 He who goes out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.

When they go back to the promised land, they find that the promised land is totally devastated. There is nothing good there and so they faced this situation. So basically, what he is saying is that, a Christian should expect tears and sorrow. It is a part of life, no different from Seneca who says this is what life is about. If you try to live a life running from tears, whatever you do tears will find you. It is like that. Now the thing is, there is this wrong theology going around, if you are a victorious Christian, if you have faith in God, you will not be sad. This is a wrong idea, because one day when you will get sickness, then you will start condemning yourself.

Ezekiel 11:19-20 (ESV) And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, 20 that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God

The people of Israel had hearts of stone. When God gives Holy Spirit, He gives you heart of flesh, which is tender. If you look at Jesus's life. Jesus cries all the time.

- Luke 19:41-42 (ESV) And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, 42 saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes
- John 11:34-36 (ESV) 34 And he said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." 35 Jesus wept. 36 So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"
- Hebrews 5:7-8 (ESV) In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. 8

So here is Jesus, but he prays. He actually cries. So, Jesus is not a man unaccustomed to sorrow. That means if you are God why would you be sorrowful. He looks at Lazarus and Lazarus has died in the cave and he see the people suffering, he empathizes.

So, sorrow became part and parcel of God's experience. So, if that's part of his experience, we too should not be afraid or shame to cry, because Jesus cried all the

time. We shouldn't be having this stoic idea that we should suppress the sorrow or if we are any less victorious a Christian if we cry. That means you look at Jesus Christ, you must be very defeated because he is crying all the time. Shouldn't he be victorious.

There are two kinds of sorrow, godly sorrow and worldly sorrow. Worldly sorrow is a horizontal dimension, you regret the sin and consequences, but it does not make you move towards God. Any sorrow that comes to you and makes you regret the fact that you have done something wrong, but you don't move towards God.

Real grief is moving towards God. Godly grief is to be genuinely sorrow for your sin, to hate it more and more and to run away from it, which means you run away from it and you run towards God. So Godly grief is a good thing. If you ever sin and you have no grief and you don't cry over your sin, I think that's a problem, because we are human beings, we are supposed to have the emotion and the emotion should follow the fact. So, you accept sadness as real and when you cry we actually see the vision of the cross, because Matthew says

Matthew 27:46 (ESV) And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

When we actually look at the cross, we see that Jesus too suffered the cross, Jesus too was abandoned by God. If you look at your own suffering you thought the world think about suffering is that as if God has abandoned, you. So therefore if you look at that verse, we understand that God understands our desperation. In verse 46 Jesus says, my God, my God why have you abandoned me. These are the words of desperation. That means your Jesus has experienced desperation. So, when we actually have sorrow and we cry, we actually look to the cross, because God understands our desperation. We can suffer without guilt. Now that's a very-very important thing. When you suffer, you turn towards the cross, you know why, because sometimes you suffer because you robbed the bank, you told the lie, you did something wrong. Now Jesus didn't do anything wrong, but when you suffer, many of us suffer because we have done something wrong, but when we look at the cross we get forgiveness of our sins from the cross.

So, the cross makes us able to suffer without guilt. Part of the problem is suffering with guilt and the difference is when you look at the cross, we can suffer without guilt and we also suffer without impatience and self-pity. Because we understand our suffering is given to God. Many of us when you look at the cross, it is like when we are suffering. When we are suffering, our lives are like a piece of the jigsaw puzzle, we don't know the head and tail of it. We don't know where your suffering fits into the whole narrative of your entire life. Later on, when you step back, years later on, you fit that piece and you can see the whole picture unraveled. When you are suffering, the thing that really hits you is that you don't know why, you are

asking, did I cause it, was I party to this, was my greed, my lust, all this, did it contribute and how does this suffering contribute to the rest of my life and the rest of my family, you can't tell because you only have one piece of the jigsaw puzzle and when you look at the cross it looks as if Jesus Christ have one piece of the jigsaw puzzle. Why would it be the most perfect person in the world, who is totally innocent be punished and you look at that piece of the jigsaw puzzle and it makes no sense and later on you find out it made perfect sense because you were suffering because you see the whole picture. He was dying for you on the cross. So therefore, I can trust that God's purposes are good even when I don't understand, just like people didn't understand the cross

So, when we suffer, we look at the cross, it takes our guilt away, it tells us Jesus suffered with us and it tells us the things that we don't understand, and the people never understood God's purposes as well.

Hebrews 12:3-4 (ESV) Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. 4 In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

When you look at the cross, no Christian worker should ever complain, because Hebrew says we have not suffered to the point of shedding blood.

#### ASSURANCE OF HIS GLORY:

5 Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy!

So when you actually sow your tears in and bring your tears and basically invest it in God, tell to God that I am crying now, I am leaving this to you, you shall have shouts of joy, just as if you put a seed, it will come back with a harvest as it were. C.S. Lewis when he first lost his wife, he was afraid to cry. The reason why he afraid to cry because *... "nobody told me grief is so much like fear"*

When you actually have fear, you give into fear and you become more fearful. So therefore, if you give in to grief, you worry that if you cry, grief will swallow you up and you become worse, but scripture promises that those who sow in tears will reap with shouts of joy. That's the difference. So, when you cry, you don't have to be afraid that just because you cry then you will be overwhelmed with tears and you will lose control. Your tears are stored up by God and he remembers those tears.

This is the favorite lament of very famous person

Precious Lord, Take my hand,  
Lead me on, let me stand,  
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn.  
Through the storm, Through the night,



Lead me on to the light  
Take my hand precious Lord, Lead me home.

When my way grows drear precious Lord linger near  
When my light is almost gone  
Hear my cry, hear my call  
Hold my hand lest I fall  
Take my hand precious Lord, lead me home

It was sung by Martin Luther King and the Lord took him home. It was one of his favorite songs and we can see how it expresses. He had a life of great sadness, being persecuted all the time, but that song lifted him up.

Revelation 21:3-4 (ESV) And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

This is the promise that the crying will stop and one day when you sow in tears, you will gain. So, it means all sorrow will ultimately result in praise in the end. That's the promise that scripture will give you. Because if you are a non-Christian and you just express your sorrow, you suppress your sorrow, you got no guarantee that it is going to turn. For a Christian, you can cry simply because all sorrow will turn into praise one day.

PSALM 88.

## 1. God understands the reality of our Darkness

Psalms 88:1-5 (ESV) 1 O Lord, God of my salvation! cry out day and night before you. 2 Let my prayer come before you; incline your ear to my cry! 3 For my soul is full of troubles, and my life draws near to Sheol. 4 I am counted among those who go down to the pit; I am a man who has no strength, 5 like one set loose among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, like those whom you remember no more, for they are cut off from your hand.

Psalms 88:6-12 (ESV) You have put me in the depths of the pit, in the regions dark and deep. 7 Your wrath lies heavy upon me, and you overwhelm me with all your waves. Selah 8 You have caused my companions to shun me; you have made me a horror to them. I am shut in so that I cannot escape; 9 my eye grows dim through sorrow. Every day I call upon you, O Lord; I spread out my hands to you. 10 Do you work wonders for the dead? Do the departed rise up to praise you? Selah 11 Is your steadfast love declared in the grave, or your faithfulness in Abaddon? 12 Are your wonders known in the darkness, or your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?

Psalms 88:13-18 (ESV) But I, O Lord, cry to you; in the morning my prayer comes before you. 14 O Lord, why do you cast my soul away? Why do you hide your face from me? 15 Afflicted and close to death from my youth up, I suffer your terrors; I am helpless. 16 Your wrath has swept over me; your dreadful assaults destroy me. 17 They surround me like a flood all day long; they close in on me together. 18 You have caused my beloved and my friend to shun me; my companions have become darkness.

It is a total dark psalm. It is full of recriminations if you actually look at it. Other psalms end differently. This psalm ends, everybody abandoned me, darkness is my closest friend.

How other psalms end

- "The way of the wicked will perish" (1:6)
- "Blessed are all who take refuge in him" (2:12)
- "Salvation belongs to the Lord; your blessing be on your people" (3:8)
- "For you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety" (4:8)
- "For you bless the righteous, O LORD; you cover him with favor as with a shield" (5:12)
- "All my enemies shall be ashamed and greatly troubled" (6:10)
- "I will sing praise to the name of the LORD, the Most High" (7:17)
- "O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!" (8:9)
- "Let the nations know that they are but men!" (9:20)
- "So that man who is of the earth may strike terror no more" (10:18)

A lot of psalms will end with a positive note. They will cry, cry, cry and then they got positive note. This one ends, darkness will be my friend. Really, really dark. The other psalm is

Psalms 39:12-13 (ESV) Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear to my cry; hold not your peace at my tears! For I am a sojourner with you, a guest, like all my fathers. 13 **Look away from me, that I may smile again, before I depart and am no more!"**

He is asking God, don't look at me. The more you look at me, the sadder I get. These are the two psalms in the whole book of psalms that end with a very-very-very dark ending in their life. In fact, the theologian Walter Bruggemann says, these psalms are an embarrassment to conventional faith.

A lot of people can't deal with depression. Barna research shows, about 18% of young people leave the church because they cannot handle depression and sadness. Darkness is abandonment.

Good thing about not knowing is that you can take this psalm and apply to every single one of us. He is not talking about, I am so sick, my enemies are coming after me. This psalm is very vague about the troubles he is in and the reason why it is vague is that it allows us to then put in its place all our own personal sorrow. Then you have got Mother Theresa, similar kind of darkness. She actually writes,

*Surrounds me on all sides – I can't lift my soul to God – no light or inspiration enters my soul . . . Heaven, what emptiness – not a single thought of Heaven enters my mind – for there is no hope. . . The place of God in my soul is blank.*

Exactly like Psalm 88. She cannot feel God, is as if she is cut off from God. So, the trouble is, if you actually believe that Jesus is about joy then you have a problem. Jesus actually said

**John 16:33 (ESV) I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."**

The world you will actually have tribulation. It is part in parcel of the world. Charles Spurgeon is called the Prince of Preachers in London. Even though he was very-very effective, he struggled with depression. He not only struggled with depression. He struggled with gout. In those days, there was no cure for gout. It was very-very painful, suffering from gout all the time and yet he could be preaching and he writes,

*"my spirits were sunken so low that I could weep by the hour like a child, and yet I knew not what I wept for . . . a kind friend was telling me of some poor old soul living near, who was suffering very great pain, and yet she was full of joy and rejoicing. I was so distressed by the hearing of that story and felt so ashamed of myself.*

So here he is in clinical depression. When you are clinical depression, you cry, cry and cry and you don't know why you are crying. Then somebody tells him the lady next door she is in more trouble but she is happy. He was surely feeling worse. So therefore, he gets very upset.

Here if you look at how this psalm ends and the way that psalm ends, God is telling us that he knows this is how men speak when they are desperate. You have to understand that God understands your tears and God is a safe place to come to when you are desperate but the fact that you have these sorts of psalms in the Book of Psalm is very useful. You know why, because this is how men speak when they are desperate and God puts it there because he understands you, so you could come to God when you are desperate and you can shout at him, you don't have to put up a false front of bravery or faith. Real faith is like this, real faith has to be expressed.

That's why when we even have worship songs here, we must actually go into lamentation songs, because lamentation will help a part of our congregation

express. We have a one-dimensional view in our congregation that only victorious Christians have joy. Some of us sitting here have no joy yet, you have got faith, you haven't given up but you are still screaming at God and you need to be aloud to scream at God. Spurgeon writes,

*that sometimes the Christian should not endure his sufferings with a gallant and a joyous heart" but "that sometimes his spirits should sink within him, and that he should become even as a little child smitten beneath the hand of God."*

So sometimes you don't have to put up a brave front. Sometimes when you are suffering, you just come to God and cry just like a child and that is a kind of safe God that you have, that will understand your tears. Rev Joseph Neuner basically counseled Mother Theresa and she had such darkness, she couldn't feel God for many-many years and he explained to her

*There was no human remedy for it (that is, she should not feel responsible for affecting it); Feeling Jesus is not the only proof of his being there, and her very craving for God was a "sure sign" of his "hidden presence" in her life; The absence was in fact part of the "spiritual side" of her work for Jesus.*

## 2. There is no better place than darkness to learn about the grace of God

Psalms 88:6-12 (ESV) You have put me in the depths of the pit, in the regions dark and deep. 7 Your wrath lies heavy upon me, and you overwhelm me with all your waves. Selah 8 You have caused my companions to shun me; you have made me a horror to them.

He is having trouble and he is blaming God. Here you have a psalm where the guy actually basically blames God for everything. This is actually shocking. He feels God is against him. Derek Kidner writes,

*The very presence of these prayer in scripture is a witness of Gods understanding. God knows how men speak when they are desperate. God put them there tells us He understands...He is identifying with some of us when we speak like that. God is saying I am a God of this man even though he has not got it right. I am your God because I am the God of grace not because of how good or how loyal he is*

So, when you pray, your theology may not necessarily be right. Spurgeon writes, fate is blind, providence has eyes.

*"[I]t would be a very sharp and trying experience to me to think that I have an affliction which God never sent me, that the bitter cup was never filled by his hand, that my trials were never measured out by him, not sent to me by his arrangement of their weight and quantity."*

So, when you actually attribute these trials to God, sending to him. It is actually not a bad thing. This means that at the back of all the trials there is some comfort to know that actually comes from God. So therefore, it is not random, it is not purposeless, and it is not totally desperate. He explains it this way,

*"If you drink of the river of affliction near its outfall, "it is brackish and offensive to the taste, but if you will trace it to its source, where it rises at the foot of the throne of God, you will find its waters to be sweet and health-giving."*

When you see the pain that comes it looks bad, but the source is actually from the throne of God and that tells you that God has a plan and it is not all bad. That's how he rationalizes. Faith is blind, that means anything can happen to you but providence has eyes. So, when accident happens to you, when sickness happens to you, fate will hit anybody, it doesn't matter who you are.

*"As long as I trace my pain to accident, my bereavement to mistake, my loss to another's wrong, my discomfort to an enemy, and so on, I am of the earth, earthy, and shall break my teeth with gravel stones; but when I rise to my God and see his hand at work, I grow calm, I have not a word of repining."*

If you think like Seneca, the philosopher that my pain is an accident, my bereavement is my mistake, my loss is another person's wrong, my discomfort is caused by an enemy, if you just localize it there, then you are at the mouth of the river, it is all crap. What he says, but when I rise to God and see his hand at work, I grow calm and I don't have a word of complain.

So, when you are actually suffering, you have to understand that you are standing at the mouth of the river and all the rubbish is going around you but you know at the head of the water somewhere where the water first started, it was pure and providence has eyes, fate is blind.

### **3. There Is A Place Where Darkness Can Be Your Friend**

Here he is interrogating God, he is very upset.

**Psalms 88:10-12 (ESV)**

10 Do you work wonders for the dead? Do the departed rise up to praise you? Selah 11 Is your steadfast love declared in the grave, or your faithfulness in Abaddon? 12 Are your wonders known in the darkness, or your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness? But I, O Lord, cry to you; in the morning my prayer comes before you. 14 O Lord, why do you cast my soul away? Why do you hide your face from me?

He is saying that God why are you punishing me, why are you giving me a tough time because if you kill me, nobody to praise you. So, he is trying to find some reason

behind it. The reason is that, he is going through a refining process. All of us start off like Job, our Christianity is a transactional Christianity, we give God love and we expect blessings in return and when suffering comes, it breaks us from the transactional mode of Christianity. When I need God, when I got trouble, then I go to God. God is only there for trouble. So that's a transactional view and many of us became Christians because of this transactional view but suffering actually purges that away. So that you have got a purer idea of your relationship with God.

**18 You have caused my beloved and my friend to shun me; my companions have become darkness.**

Spurgeon writes,

*"I would go into the deeps a hundred times to cheer a downcast spirit. It is good for me to have been afflicted, that I might know how to speak a word in season to one that is weary."*

Spurgeon has begun to believe that the darkness that he actually had has a benefit to it. It actually helps him minister to other people.

*The way to stronger faith usually lies along the rough pathway of sorrow," he said. ". . . I am afraid that all the grace that I have got out of my comfortable and easy times and happy hours, might almost lie on a penny. But the good that I have received from my sorrows, and pains, and griefs, is altogether incalculable. . . . Affliction is the best bit of furniture in my house. It is the best book in a minister's library. "*

It is completely different, and he finds that sorrow and darkness is the best teacher in his life, because it changes his life from a transactional view of Christianity to one that really is genuine. That means you love God for who he is, not what He gives you. The only way, you are going to learn that is through sorrow. Sorrow becomes the best book in my minister's library. That's shocking. So therefore, you face sorrow head on and you pray the sorrow, you invest the sorrow, so that one day this will bring back to you joy. So that should be a realistic way in which we actually face our suffering.

Monica Coleman actually suffered from depression. She writes,

*Meanwhile, I prayed for peace. In my sleepless nights, I asked God to save me, help me and rescue me from my sadness. Just make it all better. I also heard the messages that my faith told me about depression: that I was be too blessed to be stressed; that depression was a lie from "the enemy"; that suicide is an unforgiveable sin. Somewhere between my unanswered prayers and the realization that I could not worship myself into happiness, my faith died.*

*In those times, we understand when people cannot praise God. We only ask people to be honest with God. And we don't leave them alone. This is exactly what my depressed self needs: tears, music, good food, raw honesty, community. The same faith that demonizes my depression also teaches me how to have faith in the midst of it. I lost the faith I once had. I stopped believing that God only loved me if I was happy and peaceful. I also gave up on the idea that depression was punishment or isolation from God*

*My new faith is a deep trust that God is present with me and understands how I feel – especially when no one else can. I no more blame God for my sadness, than I credit God for happy days. This faith tells God how I really feel knowing that an offer of my true self is worship. I appreciate songs of sorrow more. I dance only when joyful. I am upheld by church community that can linger in pain without moving to fix it. This faith is different than what died. But it's just as holy.*

What she is saying that she has come to a state in her life that the new faith is a deep trust that God is with you and that true worship is God is able to be authentic with God. That means you come with your sorrow and in your sorrow, you bring to God and that is a dimension of worship. We have a dimension of worship is, I am jumping up and down, hallelujah and that is the presence of God. You don't really understand like Mother Theresa the darkness and pain can also be an authentic worship of God. That's how she discovers it.

That's why this kind of Christianity is real. We need to explore a little bit more of this in our own lives. Victory is not hallelujah only, victory is just trusting God in the darkness.

All of us like to end the problem with a little bow and tie nicely, fairly tell ending, because we watch too much TV. We always think that the bad guys are defeated, the hero wins. But our real life is not like that one. In real life, there are many unresolved issues but what we learn today is that we can take those unresolved issues and sadness and bring it to God and that is authentic worship. Victory is trusting God in the darkness. We have to support each other in those dark places.