

Don't Forsake Me God

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Preacher: Steven Miller

[0:00] O Lord, rebuke me not in your anger, nor discipline me in your wrath. For your arrows have sunk into me, and your hand has come down on me.

There is no soundness in my flesh because of your indignation. There is no health in my bones because of my sin. For my iniquities have gone over my head. Like a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me.

My wounds stink and fester because of my foolishness. I am utterly bowed down and prostrate. All the day I go about mourning. For my sides are filled with burning, and there is no soundness in my flesh.

I am feeble and crushed. I groan because of the tumult of my heart. O Lord, all my longing is before you. My sighing is not hidden from you. My heart throbs, my strength fails me.

In the light of my eyes, it also has gone from me. My friends and companions stand aloof from my plague, and my nearest kin stand far off. Those who seek my life lay their snares.

[1:00] Those who seek my hurt speak of ruin, and meditate treachery all day long. But I am like a deaf man. I do not hear. Like a mute man who does not open his mouth.

I have become like a man who does not hear, and in whose mouth are no rebukes. But it is for you, O Lord, do I wait. It is you, O Lord my God, who will answer.

For I said, only let them not rejoice over me, who boast against me when my foot slips. For I am ready to fall, and my pain is ever before me. I confess my iniquity.

I am sorry for my sin. But my foes are vigorous. They are mighty. And many are those who hate me wrongfully. Those who render me evil for good accuse me because I follow after good.

Do not forsake me, O Lord. O my God, be not far from me. Make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation. I think many of us can identify a point in our life where we might have felt like this, where there's just an overwhelming amount of grief and despair.

[2:01] I know that when I came back to college in my junior year, I had a particularly difficult time. Just a lot of things were going on in my life at that point. I had the most responsibilities I'd ever had at college.

There had been some difficulties in the summer beforehand. And I remember sitting down and talking with a good friend about a couple weeks in. And he just kind of looked at me and said, you know, Steve, I think you're depressed right now. And those were some of the words that I needed to hear in that moment.

And I'm really thankful for that moment of just being able to process that. And the year was difficult still. But it was good to have a friend alongside me expressing that for me. And I think that this psalm shows that we don't often think as clearly when we're afflicted, whether it's by our own sins or circumstances or other people hurting us, a lot of things can pile on top of each other.

And I think that often we don't know how to interact with God in those times. Do we remain silent because God seems to be silent? Do we rage against him in those moments? And I think that this psalm is a lesson to us when we are in distress, to pray believing that God is good even when we are in despair.

So let's pull back a few points of the despair that David's in because he's pretty much overwhelmed by everything at this point. If you look at verse 4, his sins are burdening him.

[3:16] He says, My iniquities have gone over my head, like a heavy burden they are for me. He also seems to have a real illness that's overcoming him. He says in verse 5, My wounds stink and fester because of my foolishness.

In verse 9, he claims that he has depression on him even. He says, Oh Lord, all my longing is before you and my sighing is not hidden from you.

You know, his friends have abandoned him in this, maybe because of the grossness of, like, the physical illness he had. And it says, My friends and companions stand aloof from my plague and my nearest kin stand far off. And he even has enemies coming after him.

It says, you know, in verse 12, Those who seek my life lay their snares. And they're meditating his ruin all day long. And so, all of this together, you know, usually in the Psalms, David has something declarative to say against these things.

But it's interesting that in verse 13 of Psalm 38, it says, This all leaves David stunned. You know, he's like a deaf man. He does not hear. Like a mute man who does not open his mouth. And so, we're, at this point, we're about halfway through the Psalm.

[4 : 19] And usually, at this point, is kind of where the Psalm would pivot. And it would become more prophetic. And David would proclaim the Lord's salvation over the situation. Or maybe we'd get a glimpse into the future of what's going to happen.

And we kind of hear God's faithfulness in more certain terms of like a resolved situation. And there's a few Psalms like this one where that doesn't happen. Where it ends with David still crying out for God to help him.

Not necessarily with a guarantee. And so, really, there's no, what I would call, true resolution in this Psalm. And I think that that's actually really important.

I sat, I did youth ministry at the last church we were part of. And a number of kids, depression rates are really high among teenagers right now. And I remember sitting across from one of the teenagers who was struggling with severe depression.

And him just saying to me, you know, I don't feel like there's any part of the Bible for what I'm going through right now. I said, you know, I just, you know, I've grown up in the church. And like, I just don't know any verses that would, would help me express this.

[5 : 18] And I think that this, we looked at a few Psalms. I think this may have been one of them actually. And I said, you know, I think that the Psalms and Job are there to express the burdens that you feel right now. Like God has something for you when you're in this kind of situation.

And so I think that this is a prayer for those who are sitting in the midst of unanswered prayer.

Maybe it's, you know, you're in the midst of an illness that you may never beat in your life.

Um, or you're in month after month of depression or a low point in your life. Uh, maybe you're, you know, in a new city or you're living in a new circumstance that you weren't expecting. And I think that this Psalm shows that God doesn't leave his people without a voice in that circumstance.

He gives them words for this. Um, and the words that he gives come out in verse 15. Uh, but for you, Oh Lord, do I wait? It is you, Oh Lord, my God, who will answer.

Um, and so this is an astounding sign. And the faith, I think in, in the context of this song, because if you think about verse one, um, he literally is saying that, you know, I think that God is inflicting some of these things upon me.

[6 : 21] And even though God is the one afflicting him in some ways, um, he comes and still praise to God as the source of his goodness. Um, I've thought about it a little bit and I don't know whether we can know from the Psalm, whether God was like legitimately punishing David or not.

It may have just been him being overwhelmed by his circumstances and crying out exactly what he felt. Uh, first, as I noted, this doesn't really give us a prophetic conclusion of a Psalm of like saying exactly what happened and giving a reflective circumstance.

So it's possible God was punishing him, possible not. Um, and second, just, uh, in considering it, it rings more to me of the cry of an afflicted righteous man, more like Job, um, someone who cries out just in anguish in that instance.

Um, and I think that this is, this is an encouragement once again to those who feel lost. Um, David really lays out a way to pray when there's a lack of answers surrounding us. You know, he goes ahead and he repents for his sin.

Even in this, in this dire circumstances, he says, I confess my iniquity. I'm sorry for my sin. In verse 18, uh, he asked God and to vindicate him from his enemies in the circumstance that even if he, I think in verse 16, it says, um, when my foot slips, don't let my enemies rejoice over me in this instance.

[7 : 31] Um, and for all things, he asked the Lord not to forsake him in verse 21. Do not forsake me. Oh Lord. Oh my God, be not far from me. And so God becomes the ultimate answer and longing to all the suffering that's going on here.

Um, he longs still to be with the Lord. Um, I like a quote from C.S. Lewis, um, from the screw tape letters, um, where the, the, the story of the two demons that are talking to one another and kind of conspiring to bring down a man who becomes a Christian essentially within the book.

Um, and the older mentoring demon tells the younger one who's supposed to be afflicting the man, uh, this. He says, you know, watch out. Our cause is never much more in danger than when a human no longer desiring, but still intending to do our enemies.

Will looks round upon a universe from which every trace of him seems to have vanished and asks, why has he been forsaken and yet still obeys? Um, I think that this Psalm, uh, really tames us in our areas of anxiety and of anger against God and brings us to a place of kind of humility, essentially when we sit under a difficult circumstance, I think it really instructs us in how to pray, um, when we feel lost or abandoned or forsaken.

Um, so let's just take that into our time of prayer tonight. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.