

A PLEA OF DESPERATION

Despair can be a relentless enemy. Whether its cause is external factors or internal choices, the grip of desperation may paralyze us and make us ineffective. In Psalm 38, David begins with a desperate cry pleading for mercy and relief. In verses 1-14, he poetically describes his miserable state. How do I know if specific troubles and hardships are caused by God? If I want to be like David, then I should first acknowledge that God is ultimately in control and guides the course of his creation through his providential will. Also, I should be self-aware enough to know that I am far from perfect, and even if this is a disciplinary action by God, he is well within his authority to do so. I am weak. I act out of selfish desires. I ignore, or outright reject, the path he has laid before me and turn aside toward my own goals.

Understanding his own faults and weaknesses, David describes them in physically debilitating terms. Sin wounds us, and when left untreated, those wounds become infected and fester. Transgressions are like weights that pile up on our shoulders and threaten to overwhelm us if we don't find a way to cast them aside.

Phrases like, "When it rains, it pours," or "Adding insult to injury," come to mind because sometimes when things do not seem like they could get any worse, the ones we love, who should be there to lift us up and help us out are nowhere to be found. Instead, those nearby are the ones who want to tear us down. Finally, in the depths of despair, we may completely close ourselves off, refusing to listen or say anything at all.

Thankfully, David does not end his song in that void! In verse 15, there is a drastic turn. The key to this turn is to whom it is directed. People search for answers to their problems in many places. Worldly sources may satisfy momentarily, however, they are no permanent solution to our problems. Only the LORD can satisfy us completely. David knows that only God can truly deliver/rescue/save us from the ultimate consequences of our guiltiness before him. So we repent, sorrowfully turn to God, and confess, acknowledge our shortcomings, to him.

When we do so, the LORD will hear us and will act on our behalf. As John writes in his first letter, *he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness* (1John 1:9; ESV). When my trust is in God and Jesus, I do not need to be trapped by despair. I do not have to be haunted by my past mistakes. I can rise above the frustration that others (even those close to me) bring into my life.

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

Greg Surles