

Redeemer

C O U N S E L I N G

EXPERIENCING THE PSALMS

— Ashley Buechele —



THE PSALMS

The psalms testify to the broken, fallen, chaotic state of our sin-sick world. It hurts. This is not the way things were supposed to be. God gives us the psalms to tell us that He sees our pain, He gets it; He cares. He gives us the psalms to help us identify and voice what we are feeling. He gives us the psalms to invite us to cry out to Him. And He gives us the psalms to provide community as we join the chorus of fellow sufferers over the ages.

God sees and cares about our plight so much that He did not stop at witnessing our pain and having compassion from afar, but He took mindblowing action. He came down to walk the destruction amongst us, to take the worst of it for us on the cross and to end it.

He sees you. His heart breaks for you. He is so moved that He came down to earth and died to stop sin and its pain. Let us look to His psalms for sustenance as we journey to the day of no more tears.

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A PSALM OF BETRAYAL



LISTEN ALONG

Have you been betrayed? Someone you trusted, someone you loved has turned on you. Someone who once offered you safety and connection is now a source of physical, emotional, spiritual or psychological danger. Your world has been turned upside down, what you thought was up was down, and you are reeling and disoriented. What resonates as you slowly read the Psalm?

01.

God wanted this experience of betrayal recorded in the Bible. He sees it. And He wants you to know He sees it. How does it feel in your body to be seen by God?

03.

God does not just see this suffering, He understands it from firsthand experience. Imagine God experiencing this suffering, going through something similar to you with someone He loves. Where is He? What has happened? What does His body posture look like? What do His eyes look like?

02.

God validates how bad betrayal is, validates that it involves feelings of horror, terror, trembling and death. How does it feel to have the psalmist testify to the horror of this experience? To have God endorse this testimony to the horror?

04.

Spend a moment sitting with this God.



Psalm 55:1-14

1 Listen to my prayer, O God,
do not ignore my plea;

2 hear me and answer me.
My thoughts trouble me and I
am distraught

3 because of what my enemy is
saying, because of the threats of
the wicked; for they bring down
suffering on me and assail me in
their anger.

4 My heart is in anguish within
me; the terrors of death have
fallen on me.

5 Fear and trembling have beset
me; horror has overwhelmed me.

6 I said, "Oh, that I had the wings
of a dove! I would fly away and
be at rest.

7 I would flee far away and stay
in the desert;

8 I would hurry to my place of
shelter, far from the tempest and
storm."

9 Lord, confuse the wicked,
confound their words, for I see
violence and strife in the city.

10 Day and night they prowl
about on its walls; malice and
abuse are within it.

11 Destructive forces are at
work in the city; threats and lies
never leave its streets.

12 If an enemy were insulting
me, I could endure it; if a foe
were rising against me, I could
hide.

13 But it is you, a man like
myself, my companion, my close
friend,

14 with whom I once enjoyed
sweet fellowship at the house of

A PSALM OF CHRONIC PAIN



LISTEN ALONG

We are embodied souls living in a broken world. Our bodies get sick and break and our souls register the pain mentally and emotionally. Chronic pain often takes us to our limits, spends our finite resources, and takes us to a place of overwhelm and despair. It frequently cuts us off from relationships as the pain constantly demands attention and beckons us inward and makes it hard to connect with others. The psalm describes the inner world of such a sufferer. Have you been here? Do you live here?

01.

Close your eyes and picture a time when you were in long-term pain. Where are you? What are you doing? Where do you feel the pain in your body? What does it feel like? How is the physical pain reflected in your thoughts? In your emotions? How have your relationship patterns changed due to the pain? Relationships with others? With God?

sees that we are consumed by it. He normalizes the anguish, the questions, the bargaining, the exhaustion. Go back to the scenario above and imagine God moving towards you with compassion saying "I know, it is so, so bad."

03.

Pray this psalm to God as your own. Take in His company, His compassion.

02

In Psalm 6, God communicates that He understands what chronic pain is like for us. He



Psalm 6:2-7

2 Have mercy on me, Lord, for I am faint; heal me, Lord, for my bones are in agony.

3 My soul is in deep anguish. How long, Lord, how long?

4 Turn, Lord, and deliver me; save me because of your unfailing love.

5 Among the dead no one proclaims your name. Who praises you from the grave?

6 I am worn out from my groaning. All night long I flood my bed with weeping and drench my couch with tears.

7 My eyes grow weak with sorrow; they fail because of all my foes.

A PSALM OF HOPELESSNESS



LISTEN ALONG

Is there a part of you that experiences hopelessness? A part of you that doubts God is as He says He is? Maybe it's a loud, public part; more often within the church, it is a repressed part. We know what we "should believe" and "should say" and others might judge or shame us if we go off script, so we stick to the "should" script. Might parts of this psalm resonate with your hopeless or doubting part?

01.

Close your eyes and see if you can notice the part of you that feels hopelessness or doubts. And notice any parts that seek to edit that part, that hold it back from speaking up. What is the concerned part afraid might happen if the target part spoke to God?

02.

As we walk through the broken world, we collect formative experiences of how others respond when we give them negative feedback. Of these, our experiences

of our parents are the most formative. How might your parents have responded to the hopeless or doubting part of you?

03.

God's response is different than a human's response. His inclusion of this psalm is His welcome of these parts of you. He is not flustered, He is not surprised, He is not dysregulated. Imagine God welcoming the hopeless or doubting part of you. How does it feel to have this part seen and safe?



Psalm 88:3-18

3 I am overwhelmed with troubles and my life draws near to death.

4 I am counted among those who go down to the pit; I am like one without strength.

5 I am set apart with the dead, like the slain who lie in the grave, whom you remember no more, who are cut off from your care.

6 You have put me in the lowest pit, in the darkest depths.

7 Your wrath lies heavily on me; you have overwhelmed me with all your waves.

8 You have taken from me my closest friends and have made me repulsive to them. I am confined and cannot escape;

9 my eyes are dim with grief. I call to you, Lord, every day; I spread out my hands to you.

10 Do you show your wonders to the dead? Do their spirits rise up and praise you?

11 Is your love declared in the grave, your faithfulness in Destruction?

12 Are your wonders known in the place of darkness, or your righteous deeds in the land of oblivion?

13 But I cry to you for help, Lord; in the morning my prayer comes before you.

14 Why, Lord, do you reject me and hide your face from me?

15 From my youth I have suffered and been close to death; I have borne your terrors and am in despair.

16 Your wrath has swept over me; your terrors have destroyed me.

17 All day long they surround me like a flood; they have completely engulfed me.

18 You have taken from me friend and neighbor—darkness is my closest friend.

A PSALM OF FEAR



LISTEN ALONG

When God made you, He gave you an internal alarm system built to identify perceived danger, register fear and initiate response, all without thinking and in the blink of an eye. We scan for real-time danger in our present and imagine possible danger in the future. When we spot it, our heart speeds, our thoughts race, our muscles ready to fight, flight or freeze. Listen to the psalmist's experience of fear.

01.

Close your eyes and take a moment to focus on your body. Scan your body for any alarms going off. Notice if muscles are tense. Notice numbness. Notice racing thoughts. They are pointing to dangers; what dangers are you touching?

02.

Jesus invoked this psalm on the cross. Jesus touched these dangers and registered this fear. He knows what it is like to walk your world, to touch your dangers, to feel your fear. Reread the psalm through Jesus' perspective.

03.

Close your eyes and imagine yourself sitting on a bench looking at your danger. Imagine Jesus coming and sitting beside you. What does He feel towards you? What does He say? How does your experience of the danger change with Jesus' company?

Psalm 22:11-18

11 Do not stay so far from me, for trouble is near, and no one else can help me.

12 My enemies surround me like a herd of bulls; fierce bulls of Bashan have hemmed me in!

13 Like lions they open their jaws against me, roaring and tearing into their prey.

14 My life is poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart is like wax, melting within me.

15 My strength has dried up like sunbaked clay. My tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth. You have laid me in the dust and left me for dead.

16 My enemies surround me like a pack of dogs; an evil gang closes in on me. They have pierced my hands and feet.

17 I can count all my bones. My enemies stare at me and gloat.

18 They divide my garments among themselves and throw dice for my clothing.





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At Redeemer Counseling, Ashley works with individuals and pre-marital couples. She counsels in areas including abuse, trauma, depression, anxiety, grief, boundaries and relationships. Ashley has led support groups focused on addictions and boundaries, has taught the class, "How People Change," and has led parent care workshops.

She holds a master's in biblical counseling from Westminster Theological Seminary.

