

"Because of My Sin"

Psalm 38

This psalm begins the same way the 6th psalm begins and is another of the seven penitential psalms (the other being 32, 51, 102, 130, and 143). There are some scholars that put a chronological order to four of these penitential psalms and form a series by them: Psalm 61, 38, 51, and 32, in that order. If that's the case, this psalm deals with the sin that David committed with Bathsheba and the subsequent events that followed. Although there is no indication given in the title nor the psalm as to the occasion, I do believe it was on that occasion that it was written. How quickly in proximity to the events it would have been penned is unknown.

There are several ways this psalm can be divided but I've chosen, as others have, to divide into three (3) paragraphs or points, each section beginning with a name for God: the first section (vs. 1-8) begins with יהוה - LORD; the second (vs. 9-14) begins with אדני - Lord; and the third section encompasses both of those first two terms - יהוה - LORD, אדני - Lord, as well as אלהי אדני - Lord my God (showing a personal relationship with the Almighty).

This psalm is entirely about the chastening of the Lord upon David for his sin. Every verse has a first-person personal pronoun (I, me, my, mine) showing how David felt about his sin and by application how we should feel about our sin - both before and after we got saved. Sorrow for sin doesn't seem to be "felt" or demonstrated in our day - but it should be.

I've referenced the chastening of the Lord in our study of Psalm 6, 13, 30, and 32, as well as a few times in our study of the book of Hebrews on Sunday evenings and a couple

times on Sunday morning – so it is an important principle in the Bible for us to understand.

I. CHASTENING BECAUSE OF SIN – VS. 1-8

A. Plea for mercy in the chastening – vs. 1-2

1. **“Rebuke me not in thy wrath”** – This is a poetic way for David to plead for God’s mercy rather than the harsh treatment he deserved. God is not a “big bully in the sky” just waiting for His child to mess up so He can discipline us, but to hear some teach and preach this concept, that’s what you would think He is. He does, however, hate sin and for His children, He will discipline them to bring them back into His favor because He loves them.
2. **“Neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure”**
– the rebuke is the chastening.

The word for “chasten” is seen throughout the Bible in various ways:

- a) **A Sign of Love** – God disciplines as a father corrects his child (Deut. 8:5, Prov. 3:11-12).
- b) **A Call to Repentance** – Chastisement leads sinners back to God (Jer. 30:11, Isa. 26:16).
- c) **A Refining Process** – Discipline purifies and sanctifies (Ps. 94:12, Mal. 3:2-3).
- d) **A Warning Against Persistent Sin** – Severe discipline comes when people ignore God’s commands (Ps. 38:1, Lam. 3:39-40).
- e) **A Source of Righteousness** – God’s discipline trains His people in holiness (Heb. 12:5-11).

3. Verse two (2) is what the rebuke and chastening felt like to the psalmist – they were piercing his very soul, causing him great anguish of mind and body.

**B. Acknowledgment that sin brought the chastening
- vs. 3-5**

1. Verse three (3) uses the phrase **“because of my sin,”** and verse five (5) the phrase **“because of my foolishness.”** He owned up to what was causing his chastening, and it was because of this acknowledgement that he was able to find a path forward in his walk with the Lord.
2. Verse three (3) makes the connection between the anger of the Lord and David’s sin by using synonymous parallelism.
 - a) **“No soundness in my flesh” = “neither is there rest in my bones”**
 - b) **“Because of thine anger” = “because of my sin”**
3. Verse four (4) is an expansion on verse three (3) and shows that his sin was overwhelming everything about him as a wave would a ship.

He points out the weight of those sins on his mental health was equally overwhelming.
4. Verse five (5) speaks of the wounds that had putrefied to the point of stench and were growing (“corrupt”). Considering where this verse is within the context of the psalm, immediately following the mention of the weight of the burden of his sin, it is my view that

this is a figurative view of the wounds to the soul and spirit.

Listen to how Charles Spurgeon describes this:

Conscience lays on stripe after stripe till the swelling becomes a wound and suppurates, and the corruption within grows offensive. What a horrible creature man appears to be to his own consciousness when his depravity and vileness are fully opened up by the law of God, applied by the Holy Spirit! It is true there are diseases which are correctly described in this verse, when in the worst stage; but we prefer to receive the expressions as instructively figurative, since the words "because of my foolishness" point rather at a moral than a physical malady. Some of us know what it is to stink in our own nostrils so as to loathe ourselves. Even the most filthy diseases cannot be so foul as sin. No ulcers, cancers, or putrifying sores, can match the unutterable vileness and pollution of iniquity. Our own perceptions have made us feel this. We write what we do know, and testify what we have seen; and even now we shudder to think that so much of evil should lie festering deep within our nature.

C. Physical manifestation of the chastening - vs. 6-8

As stated before, I believe the predominant aspect of the chastening of the Lord is one of internal struggle and conviction. That said, internal, mental anguish to the degree seen in this psalm will inevitably show in very real and obvious sickness

and pain.

II. CONSEQUENCES BECAUSE OF CHASTENING – VS. 9-14

A. Physical consequences – vs. 9-10

1. David expresses humility and servitude in addressing God as “Lord” (אֲדֹנָי), rather than the covenant name “LORD” (יְהוָה), showing that he recognized his sin and the consequences of it and how that affected his relationship with his Lord and Master.
2. Every desire (longing) he had and every groan (described in verse 10) he uttered was open before the Lord – David knew he could hide nothing from Him, which is the first step in recovering the lost fellowship he once had.

B. Relational consequences – vs. 11-12

1. Friends forsook him (vs. 11) – those closest to him (“lovers”), his companions (“friends”), and even his family (“kinsmen”) stayed away from him. His spirit was so broken and so foul because of the burden of his sin that he was not very good company, to say the least.
2. Foes attacked him (vs. 12) – they attempted to take advantage of him while in this state of misery.

The enemy of every child of God – Satan – will do the same today. He will use our sin against us as long as we allow him to and try to destroy us and our testimony.

C. Emotional consequences - vs. 13-14

David acted as if he didn't even hear their attacks and gave no response at all. This isn't because he was above the attacks and knew they were unmerited and unfounded. **Considering the verses before these, this is because he knew they had a case to make, and he was emotionally incapable of fostering any kind of reply that would have done any good.** He was discouraged by his situation, knowing it was of his own making.

III. COURAGE TO TRUST GOD THROUGH THE CHASTENING - vs. 15-20

It would be easy to fall under the wait of the chastening and to give up trusting God for anything, but David shows that that's the last thing we should do when chastening comes, no matter what form it takes.

A. Hope brought courage to seek help - vs. 15-16

1. David recognizes the only hope he had of getting through this time in his life was in the Lord **his** God - the only One that could help.
2. Verse sixteen (16) goes back to the previous two verses and references those enemies that were coming against him as he was slipping further and further away from his moorings in the Lord.

He needed help and he realized at this point that he needed to cry out for that help. That took courage.

B. Courage to demonstrate godly sorrow - vs. 17-18

These two verses give us a simple definition and

application for what it means to be truly repentant for sin.

1. Recognize your position - **“ready to halt [stumble, fall]”**
2. Realize what the problem has caused - **“my sorrow is continually before me”**
3. Respond to the Person who can help - **“I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin.”**

As a child of God, we can (and should) go directly to God in repentance and prayer, confessing our sin and forsaking that sin. It's more than “being sorry because we got caught” - it's a complete change of thought about our sin.

2 Corinthians 7:8-11

⁸ For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though *it were* but for a season. ⁹ Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. ¹⁰ For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. ¹¹ For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, *what* clearing of yourselves, yea, *what* indignation, yea, *what* fear, yea, *what* vehement desire, yea, *what* zeal, yea, *what* revenge! In all *things* ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

C. Godly sorrow produced a change - vs. 19-20

The change is seen in the last part of verse twenty

(20): **"because I follow the thing that good is."**

The chastening of the Lord produced the desired change in David, just as chastening should do in us today.

Conclusion: Verses twenty-one and twenty-two (21-22) are a fitting conclusion to this psalm.

These verses go back to the first verse and act as a the other "book end" for the psalm: the first verse finds David pleading for God's mercy, and he comes back to that at the end, recognizing that only the Lord God could relieve his anguish and suffering.

A lady visiting the Holy Land came upon a sheepfold located high on a hilltop. Her attention was drawn to one poor sheep lying by the side of the road bleating in pain. Looking more closely, she discovered that its leg was injured. She asked the shepherd how it happened. "I had to break it myself," he answered sadly. "It was the only way I could keep that wayward creature from straying into unsafe places. From past experience I have found that a sheep will follow me once I have nursed it back to health. Because of the loving relationship that will be established as I care for her, in the future she will come instantly at my beck and call."

The woman replied thoughtfully, "Sometimes we poor human sheep also want our stubborn ways and as a result stray into dangerous paths until the Good Shepherd sends sorrow and pain to arrest us. Coming then into a sweeter and closer communion with our Savior, we at last are conditioned to hear His voice and follow His leading."