

The Despair in Disobedience

Psalm 38: 1-4

David was a man of great influence and power. The majority of his life was spent as God's anointed over Israel. He had experienced the presence and power of God in mighty and unusual ways. David had known the joys of serving the Lord and the victory of triumph over his enemies. However, David also had dealt with great anguish of soul and utter defeat. While he enjoyed great victories on the battle field, he suffered defeat from the struggles within. At times David appeared to have it all together as an honorable king and valiant soldier, but within he was in turmoil due to the sin in his life and unwise decisions he had made.

While we are not in a position of prominence and great influence like David, we too have battled with inner struggles as well. Our outward appearance may show that all is well, but within we are struggling to overcome a battle that rages. For the believer these struggles become quite intense. As we wander from God, choosing to engage in sin, the Spirit convicts and chastises our poor decisions. At first we may ignore the pleading of the Spirit, but despair of soul will soon become a sobering reality if we refuse to heed the Spirit's direction for our lives.

This passage offers guidance for those who have wandered from the Lord, walking outside of His will. Surely we all can relate to these words of David. If you are struggling today, I hope they will encourage you to seek the Lord for restoration. I want to consider the [expressions](#) of David as we think on: [The Despair in Disobedience](#).

I. The Conviction of David (1-4) – In the opening verses of this psalm, David reveals the deep conviction he feels during this difficult season in life. It is widely believed this was written regarding his sin with Bathsheba. Notice:

A. His Appeal (1) – [O LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath: neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.](#)

David refused to acknowledge or admit his sin for an extended period, but God eventually sent Nathan the prophet to confront him and reveal His displeasure for David's sin. Once confronted openly, David admitted his sin. Here we see no denial of his sin or any attempt to justify his actions. David was guilty and he knew there was no need to deny his guilt. He doesn't argue with God. He is now pleading for mercy from the Lord. David knew he didn't want to face the chastening of God while He was angry with him over his sin.

- I am thankful we serve a gracious and merciful Lord. He willingly endured our sin and died in our place so we could escape the wrath of God. Our sin was judged in the body of God's Son. However, salvation is not a free pass to sin and live as we please. We can expect the chastening

hand of God when we wander from Him, choosing to indulge the flesh. Like David we need to admit our sin and seek the Lord's grace and mercy.

B. His Agony (2-3) – *For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore.* ^[3] *There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin.*

God had not literally shot David with arrows that stuck in his flesh, but his sin had caused emotional and physical suffering. David was so distressed by the heavy hand of conviction that he literally became ill. His sleep had been taken from him and he was physically exhausted. David's life had become miserable from the chastening of God due to his sin.

- Few like to admit it, but God will not allow His children to live as they please, wandering in sin, without consequence. When we get out of the will of God and forsake our sweet fellowship with Him, we can expect to feel His chastening hand of conviction. For the believer, life outside God's will is miserable. He will not abandon us due to bad decisions, but we can expect to deal with chastisement for sin.

C. His Admission (4) – *For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.* David finally reached his breaking point – emotionally, physically, and spiritually. The burden of his sin while dealing with continual conviction had become too heavy to bear. He confessed his sin before God and acknowledged his great need.

- This is always the first step toward restoration. The unsaved must come to place they realize their sin and confess their need for Christ. Believers who wander in sin must also be willing to admit their sin and seek the Lord to forgive their transgression and restore fellowship. Restoration will never come apart from admission of our need.

II. The Confession of David (9-10) – Here David offers an impassioned confession unto the Lord. Consider:

A. His Desire (9a) – *Lord, all my desire is before thee.* David had walked with the Lord and experienced the joy of fellowship with Him in the past. Since his sin with Bathsheba he had not communed with the Lord. David remembered the joy of fellowship and he longed to have that again. More than anything, David desired the Lord and longed to walk with Him.

- I am willing to admit that sin appeals to the flesh, but it always comes at a cost. You cannot indulge the flesh and walk with the Lord at the same time. If you have ever experienced genuine

fellowship with the Lord, you will be miserable without it. Sin may satisfy the cravings of the flesh, but it will never satisfy the longing within our spirit to commune with the Lord.

B. His Discernment (9b) – [and my groaning is not hid from thee](#). David realized nothing had been hidden from the Lord. While others may not have witnessed his sin with Bathsheba, God saw it all. He was well aware of David's sin, and He was also aware of the great anguish of soul David felt. This was convicting, but it was also comforting. David knew that God knew his heart. He was aware of his sin, but he was also aware of his desire for restoration. Nothing was hidden from God.

- Like with David, God sees and knows every aspect of our lives. He is aware of the inner most recesses of our hearts. He knows our desires and the burdens we carry. He is well aware of our sin, and yet He is also aware of our great need for Him. He is always willing to restore us if we will only come to Him, admitting our need. [1 John 1:9 – If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.](#)

C. His Despair (10) – [My heart panteth, my strength faileth me: as for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me](#). David had reached the bottom. He was living in the depths of despair. His heart longed for fellowship with the Lord again and he was physically exhausted. Most despairing was his loss of joy. He had lost his spiritual vision and longed to have it restored. David was admitting that he no longer desired to go on in sin, apart from communion with the Lord.

- This is a desperate place to dwell for the believer. When we choose to indulge the flesh instead of walking with the Lord, we can expect to endure such despair. Sin may please the flesh, but in the quietness of contemplation the Spirit will speak. The joy will have been removed and spiritual despair will result. This is the most miserable condition for anyone. There is nothing worse than experiencing the joy of the Lord and then having that removed because of sin.

- As difficult as such a position is to endure, it is actually a good place to be for those who have wandered in sin. God never encourages or condones our sin, but when we are willing to acknowledge our need and confess it to God, we are well on our way to restoration. If the joy is gone, it can be restored. The Lord is faithful to those who seek Him!

III. The Intercession of David (21-22) – David closed this humbling psalm with a prayer to the only one who could deliver. In the depths of his despair, David finally cried out to God. Notice:

A. He sought God's Presence (21) – [Forsake me not, O LORD: O my God, be not far from me](#). This is a simple plea and yet it is very profound. David cried out in his despair for God to be near him. He had endured a season when he had not felt the Lord near him. While his flesh may have enjoyed the sin, he eventually dealt with exhaustion because of it. The worst aspect of his sin was the broken fellowship with the Lord. He cried out for God to restore him and prayed that he would not be forsaken.

- As believers we know that the Lord has promised to never leave or forsake us. We enjoy the abiding presence of the Spirit. However, sin can hinder our fellowship. Like David, if you have ever experienced the presence of God in your life, real fellowship with Him, you will not want to go on without it. Thankfully we don't have to; He is near those who desire to be near Him!

B. He sought God's Power (22) – [Make haste to help me, O Lord my salvation](#). Although David was king of Israel, having at his disposal the power and might of the nation, he acknowledged his need for the help of God. At this moment, he stood in need of help that men could not provide. His need was such that only the Lord could provide. He needed the Lord and cried out for help.

- We are nothing within ourselves. We stand in desperate need of the Lord's touch and help each moment we live. I need the Lord everyday as I walk among this world and try to serve Him. I am unable to resist the temptation that comes my way alone. I need His guidance and wisdom. I need the power of God to make it through this life – we all do. He will graciously help those who desire it. He is ever near those who seek Him!

Conclusion: This has been a very intimate look into the life of David. He has borne his soul and confessed his sin. He has revealed his great need for the Lord. While we may not have engaged in similar sin, our need is the same. We all battle the flesh and temptation. We too are prone to sin and failure. Thankfully our failures don't have to be final or define our Christian journey. There is help and restoration in the Lord. If there are needs, bring them to the Lord and confess them today. If you are unsaved, come to Him with a repentant heart of faith and believe on Him for salvation!