

**Psalm 38 — “How to Pray When You’re Sick, Suffering, and Disoriented”**

Sin is not the cause of *\*every\** illness, but it is the cause of *some* illnesses. (Bill Barrick)

Suffering is the form of discipline in God’s school of Righteousness! (Willem VanGemeren)

**Ralph Venning:**

- “Sin is worse than affliction, than death, than Devil, than Hell. Affliction is not so afflictive, death is not so deadly, the Devil not so Devilish, Hell not so hellish as SIN IS! The four evils I have just named are truly terrible (affliction, death, Devil, hell) and from all of them everyone is ready to say, O LORD: DELIVER US. Yet NONE of those, nor all of them together, are as bad as sin!”

- How do you pray when you’ve sinned? When you’re suffering for it? When you’re disciplined for it? When you feel God’s heavy hand, His sharp arrows, His sharp spear, His discipline?
- Some **questions** you can ask yourself when you’re sick, suffering & afflicted to ascertain if God is disciplining you for sin. You could ask...
  1. *Have I sinned or gotten off the track of obedience to what I know I should be doing, and is this setback God’s way of getting me back on track and into fellowship with Him?*
  2. *Is God using this to trim off some rough edges of my personality and develop a more Christ-like character in me?*
  3. *Is God using my suffering as a stage upon which his name and wisdom may be glorified? Is it a place for me to show that I love him for who He is, entirely apart from whatever material and physical benefits he may have given me?*  
(from James Montgomery Boice)

Psalm 38 is a “**Psalm of Disorientation**” — times when you experience the brokenness of life — and everything seems chaotic.

- includes LAMENT psalms — individual and community laments
- includes PENITENTIAL psalms — expressing regret/sorrow over sins we’ve committed [**\*Ps 38\***]

**THESIS — In Ps 38, we have a God-given template of *how to pray* when you’re sick, suffering & disoriented.**

**I. GOD — YOU SEE MY SIN! (1-8)**

WHY?

Because of my “sin” (v.3)

Because of my “iniquities” (v.4)

And my sin is “folly” (v.5)

**• Why does God allow sickness & suffering?**

- (1) Because of our **sin**
- (2) for his own **glory** & plan
- (3) to allow **Christ** to heal at *that time in his ministry [1st century]*
- (4) to allow other saints to **pray** fervently & God heals in response to those prayers to increase praise.
- (5) to teach & **mature** believers thru suffering/perseverance.
- (6) to prompt you to consider the pains of **hell**
- (7) to cause you to anticipate afresh the perfection of **heaven**

**II. GOD — YOU KNOW MY STRUGGLES! (9-12)**

Struggles relating to...

1. emotions (9)
2. weakness (10a)
3. loneliness (11)
4. opponents (12)

John Flavel gives wise counsel. In your struggles & afflictions, you have to remember:

- a) God is sovereign!
- b) God works in providence.
- c) Afflictions are not eternal for God’s children.
- d) Afflictions are a treasure of blessings (Rom 5.1-5 & Heb 12.10b!)

**III. GOD — YOU HEAR MY SUPPLICATIONS! (13-22)**

The key: verse 18 — “confess your sin” —

Remember the joy & promises of confessing your sin & the joy of God's forgiveness:

- (1) he takes away your sin (John 1.29)
- (2) he forgets them (Heb 10.17)
- (3) he washes them away (Isa 1.18)
- (4) he blots them out (Isa 43.25)
- (5) he wipes them out like a cloud (Isa 44.22)
- (6) he pardons them (Isa 55.7)
- (7) he buries them in the depths of the sea (Micah 7.19)

“Shall I now entreat you to consider what has been said, and to think what an abominable and ugly thing sin is? It is the worst of evils, worse than the worst of words can express. I have shown you how it is contrary to God and man. For proof of this I have brought witness from Heaven, Earth, and Hell. I have shown you how dearly it cost Jesus Christ who died for it, and how dearly it will cost you, if you live and die in it!!! Therefore, stand in awe and sin not! Lay up the Word of God’s command, promise, and threatening, that you may not SIN against him! Take heed of sinning, for at once you sin against GOD and ALSO your own selves!” (Ralph Venning)

## Ten Passages for Severe Illness

*Here are ten passages exemplifying God’s love for us through Christ, to buoy you through the tempest of severe illness. Guard them in your heart.*

1. Psalm 18:2 — “The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.”
2. Romans 8:38–39 — “For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
3. Psalm 23:4 — “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.”
4. John 11:25–26 — “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.”
5. Psalm 46:1–3 — “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.”
6. 2 Corinthians 4:16–18 — “Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.”
7. Psalm 73:26 — “My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.”
8. 1 Peter 1:3–5 — “According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”
9. Psalm 121:1–2 — “I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.”
10. Revelation 21:4–5 — “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.”

*[Compiled by Kathryn Butler, Trauma/Critical Care Surgeon in Boston]*

**HE WILL HOLD ME FAST**

When I fear my faith will fail  
 Christ will hold me fast  
 When the tempter would prevail  
 He will hold me fast  
 I could never keep my hold  
 Through life's fearful path  
 For my love is often cold  
 He must hold me fast

**He will hold me fast**  
**He will hold me fast**  
**For my Savior loves me so**  
**He will hold me fast**

Those He saves are His delight  
 Christ will hold me fast  
 Precious in His holy sight  
 He will hold me fast

He'll not let my soul be lost  
 His promises shall last  
 Bought by Him at such a cost  
 He will hold me fast

For my life He bled and died  
 Christ will hold me fast  
 Justice has been satisfied  
 He will hold me fast  
 Raised with Him to endless life  
 He will hold me fast  
 Till our faith is turned to sight  
 When he comes at last

**PSALM 38: THE PSALTER**

*Tune: "Come thou fount of every blessing"*

In thy wrath and hot displeasure,  
 chasten not thy servant, Lord;  
 let thy mercy, without measure,  
 help and peace to me afford.  
 Heavy is my tribulation,  
 sore my punishment has been;  
 broken by thine indignation,  
 I am troubled by my sin.

With my burden of transgression  
 heavy-laden, overborne,  
 humbled low I make confession,  
 for my folly now I mourn.  
 Weak and wounded, I implore thee;  
 Lord, to me thy mercy show;  
 all my pray'r is now before thee,  
 all my trouble thou dost know.

I am prone to halt and stumble,  
 grief and sorrow dwell within,  
 shame and guilt my spirit humble;  
 I am sorry for my sin.  
 Lord, my God, do not forsake me,  
 let me know that thou art near,  
 under thy protection take me,  
 as my Savior now appear.