

Assurance For Those in Anguish

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[0 : 00] Thank you so much for reading. Please do keep your Bibles open or if it's on your phone, just keep that in front of you. If you don't know me, my name is James. I'm the assistant pastor here. I'm sure lots of you probably do know me, but if you're visiting today, then you know who I am now.

And welcome. So, yeah, so keep those Bibles open. I want to start with this question. What do you say when things go wrong? What do you say when things go wrong?

Now, this woman on the screen here, her name is Joni Erickson. She's a Christian. She loves the Lord. And at the age of 17, sadly, she was in an accident. It left her paralysed.

And she obviously felt the physical pain that came back. She talks about that in her book. But she felt the emotional pain, but she felt the spiritual pain as well.

Now, in a book she describes as early days, she says, is God listening? Does he care? You know, is God angry? Is this why I'm like this?

[1 : 17] Perhaps you know something of her pain. Perhaps you're going through something a bit like that in terms of how hard it is. Depression, anxiety, maybe a broken relationship.

Or maybe it's chronic pain that you're dealing with. Maybe you're facing death. Maybe a death of yourself or a loved one.

But maybe that's also causing some spiritual distress as well, like Joni. Because, you know, our bodies and souls, they're not completely separate.

They're very entwined, our bodies and souls. You know, the physical, maybe it's affected you spiritually as well. That's quite common, isn't it? Does God still love me, you think? Have I done something wrong to deserve this?

Let me just say, if you're not going through anguish right now, or maybe you haven't been through anguish in your life yet. Well, let me just say, we live in a broken world.

[2 : 18] We're going to, we've seen that a little bit today. We're going to see that in the passage. I think one day you probably will. So what will you say when things go wrong?

Well, there are quite a few kind of common options, aren't there? Because we could just pretend, there are words we could say. Oh, it's fine, it's fine, don't worry, just kind of bury it. You could resent.

You could be really kind of bitter towards God for what he's done. Actually, you might not have any words at all. Isn't that so common in those moments?

When you go through those horrible moments of anguish, you don't have any words left. Do you know that feeling? And actually, in those times, it kind of makes us lack assurance.

Does God see me? Does he care? This is why we need Psalm 6. Because King David here, he's in anguish in this psalm.

[3 : 28] But he doesn't resent, he doesn't pretend, he doesn't stay silent. He has words. He has words for his pain. But crucially, words that give him assurance in the pain.

And when we pray this as well, we can have assurance too. This is what we're going to see today. Words in anguish to assure us.

Well, we're going to look at the words first. And then we're going to see how they assure us. So words for when we're in anguish.

And David has physical pain. This is quite key to the psalm. So he's got physical pain. And he's got spiritual anguish. But we're just going to focus first on the physical. So have a look at verse 2 with me.

So have your Bibles there. Verse 2. Have mercy on me, Lord, for I am faint. Heal me, Lord, for my bones are in agony.

[4 : 28] This is a physical bodily thing on this first level. Now, he's faint. His bones are in agony. See that? He needs healing. Now, we don't know the exact cause. We know he's facing enemies. He's being chased by his foes, he says in verse 7.

Maybe he's injured from running from them. We just don't know. But we know that whatever he's facing, he's at death's door. Okay, so if you look at verse 5, you can see that. Whatever he's got, you can't just solve it with a bit of ibuprofen.

Okay? It's not a paper cut. It's not tiny. This is agony. Anguish. Get the picture here. Weeping. Heartbreak.

Look at verse 6. I am worn out from my groaning. Have you ever been worn out from crying? All night long I flood my bed with weeping, he says, verse 6, and drench my couch with tears.

[5 : 34] Literally it means make my bed swim all night. Verse 7. My eyes grow weak with sorrow. They fail me because of my foes.

You know that phrase, your bright eyes, ready for the day. That's not David. When you look into David's eyes, what do you see? You see a broken man. He's a wreck.

And he cries out, verse 3, my soul is in deep anguish. How long, Lord? How long? How long? Time flies when you're having fun, but isn't it the opposite?

It's true. The long seconds before that job interview you're waiting for. You're sitting in that room. The long wait for the doctor's results to come through in the post.

The grief that never really goes away. How long, we say with David. How long? Deep, physical anguish.

[6 : 34] Now, David is an example here of how we ourselves can cry out to God when we are in anguish. Actually, we don't often do what he does.

Two ways we might go wrong. Bury it or blame it. Bury it or blame it. But notice he's not cursing God.

And he's not burying it either, is he? Maybe that's kind of one of our biggest dangers as stiff upper lip Brits. Don't make a fuss.

Don't bother anyone. You know, sometimes you read these books. And they've got these question books. And they've got this message of you've got to kind of be joyful in everything.

And what they kind of mean is you've got to be gleeful in everything. And you have got to be joyful, but it doesn't mean being gleeful. It doesn't mean being happy about what you're going through. No, he's raw.

[7 : 38] He's honest. But he's faithful, isn't he? He takes the anxieties in here and he just points them up there. So when you are going through anxiety or relational exhaustion or chronic illness or something terrible like loss or miscarriage, grief, all terrible things.

You know, it feels like that pain will never leave. You don't know what to say to people when they say, how are you? Well, in those moments, you have the permission to drench your bed with tears. You have the permission to be honest with your God. You're not weak. Bother him with your pain. Because it can't bother him.

This is a safe, relatable way to pray when all is lost. But there's another layer to this, okay? Through David's suffering, go down a layer.

He's feeling the weight of his sin. Spiritual anguish. Now, this verse, verse 1, is really quite key to understanding this.

[8 : 58] Really get this in your head. Let's look at verse 1 together. Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath. It shapes everything he's saying from verse 1 onwards.

So David, we'll see this in a bit more detail in a second, but David sees his suffering in some sense. As God's wrath towards him because he's a sinner.

That's why he asks for mercy in the verses. It's a sin issue. It's not just that his bones are in agony, but his soul. Verse 3.

And his concern isn't just for healing now, but what comes after death. Verse 5. Among the dead, no one proclaims your name. He's saying, you know, I'm not going to be cut off from praising you when I die, am I?

But David is also a convicted sinner in spiritual anguish. Now, I just want to be so, so clear. This is so important to say, right? Karma doesn't exist.

[9 : 59] We need to be really clear that this is not karma. I'm not saying this is karma. This is not saying, oh, I've been zapped by God for one specific sin that I did.

And now I've got some suffering for that one specific sin. No, he's not talking about one specific sin. Actually, he doesn't mention one specific sin in verse 1. It's very general in verse 1, isn't it? Just look at it. So what's going on? Well, actually, that helps us because he isn't connecting suffering to one specific sin.

He's connecting suffering to the reality of sin. Can you see the difference? He knows that the Bible says all suffering, well, it flows from a world broken.

By what? By sin. In Adam, in the garden, we all sin. We all sin and we all cause the world to be broken.

[11:03] So David's suffering is a reminder that he's living in a broken world caused by human sin. And I think what he's doing, I think he's seeing what's happening to him with the enemy surrounding him as a kind of picture of the consequence of sin, the wrath of God coming close.

It's not meeting him yet, but coming close. A writer, Christopher Ashe, he's a great Christian writer. He says this, David endures the deepest grief known to mankind, for he understands that the hostility of his enemies is at the same time the expression of the wrath of God falling on him.

So his tears aren't just about the suffering. They go deeper to what the suffering points to. I'm suffering in a world broken by sin and my sin is a part of that, he basically says.

My sinful condition is causing me so much sorrow. David is feeling the closeness of the consequences of his sin.

You know, when Superman or whatever superhero you want to picture, he's holding up a massive object like this and it's just holding up and he thinks it's going to fall on him.

[12:24] Ready to crush him. And that's what David feels like his sin is doing here. Except in David's case, not with Superman, but David's case, he deserves it. Not because of one sin, but because in general, he is a sinner like we all are.

The broken world being broken is kind of like birth pains of final judgment to come. We're reminded of why the world is broken.

It's because of sin. Humanity's sin. My sin. Your sin. So it's right to say then, in some sense, suffering reminds us that we need a saviour.

And maybe that is sometimes what we need. Because you know, I was thinking to myself, in my day-to-day life, do I express sorrow for sin here? I think that's what he's doing on a deeper level.

Do I express sorrow for sin here like David's? Well, maybe not as much as I should. But maybe that's because I'm not facing anguish like David right now.

[13:39] Maybe it's only anguish like this that could ever get as close to realising the dire spiritual situation that we're in. That's the only thing that will drive us to our knees.

And look, this is not me saying that here's an exact why of what, why you're going through one specific suffering. I don't want to minimise suffering that you're going through or say it's not awful, because it is.

You know, in fact, suffering reminds us that things are wrong. You know? In the atheistic worldview, you can't point out suffering and say, that's wrong. You can just say it's random, but suffering, even though it's not good, it's not pointless for David and for us.

It gets us on our knees and it makes us rely on God, doesn't it? Seeing the world is broken and that we're broken and that we need a saviour.

So we're left in a position like David's. On one level, the physical, another level, the spiritual.

[14:51] Turn, Lord, and deliver me, save me, have mercy. But we don't have to stay there. We don't have to stay there.

We don't just get words for our pain here, but words that assure us God will turn, God will save, and that God does unfailingly love us so much.

These are words ultimately to assure us, words to assure. Let's go from verse 8. Away from me, all you who do evil, for the Lord has heard my weeping.

The Lord has heard my cry for mercy. The Lord accepts my prayer. For David facing his enemies and all the pain that came with that, this is his confidence. The Lord has heard.

He's heard my weeping. He's heard my cry. He accepts my prayer. What a comfort that is. He's languishing. He's a wreck. But God hears him and God saves him.

[15:59] Verse 10. All my enemies will be overwhelmed with shame and anguish. They will turn back and suddenly be put to shame. Now he was in anguish at the beginning of the psalm, but now his enemies will be instead.

It's a reversal. And we'll dig into this a little bit more, but just, first of all, just listen to the comfort here. Hear the comfort. When you are an emotional wreck, when you're suffering, when you're facing death, sometimes it feels like no one is listening, like no one understands what you're going through.

But God hears. He hears your weeping. He hears your cries. He knows what you're facing. He sees every tear.

But more than that, he gets you. God the Son, in his humanity, what did he do? Well, he knows exactly what it's like to suffer because he came down.

He knew what it was to be hungry, to be poor, to face exhaustion. Jesus knew that. He knew what it was to cry over a death of a loved one.

[17:14] Lazarus. He says, my soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. You know, he's actually quoting this psalm when he says that. Do you know that? When he says, I'm overwhelmed with sorrow.

There's nothing worse when someone in church, bless them, when they try their best to comfort you in your pain, but they have absolutely no idea what a blessing it is when you have a friend who's gone through what you've been through.

You can talk about it, you both get it, but how much more with the Lord Jesus? Jesus is that friend who's overwhelmed with sorrow with you.

He doesn't avoid suffering. He comes into our suffering, doesn't he? And on the cross, he felt the suffering the most. If you're trusting in him, he's also the one who will deliver you from your physical pain.

That's not something a friend and church can offer you, is it? Not now, but in the new creation, yes.

One day, Jesus will bring you from this cursed and broken world into a perfect world where there'll be no more pain, no more death, and he'll personally come over and wipe the tear from your eye.

[18:40] On that day, sin, evil and pain and sickness and the devil will suddenly, as this psalm says, be put to shame. Christ hears you and he will ultimately deliver you.

What a comfort. But as good as that is, there's assurance in our spiritual anguish as well. This is just so lovely.

This is the thing that has warmed my heart the most this week and I'm so excited to bring this to you. You know, with all these psalms, Jesus is ultimately the one who prays these psalms. He's the greater King David, as the Bible says.

But how can Jesus pray this, you think? So, this is kind of on a deeper level. It's that lament over sin. But Jesus is sinless.

So how could Jesus pray this? Well, when David feels God's judgment over him for his sin, Jesus prays this psalm feeling God's judgment over him for our sin.

[19:45] one of the most beautiful things about Jesus is that he doesn't save us from afar. He comes down into our mess and he goes through it all to save us.

How? Well, he felt the exact sorrow, not just the pain and the suffering of this broken world, but he felt the sorrow that the weight of God's judgment was over him, just like we do, just like we might do and we recognise our sin.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, I imagine he felt this exact feeling moments before the cross, moments before the judgment of God was about to fall on him.

Well, Jesus is in great sorrow because of that. He could have so easily prayed this psalm. I drenched my couch with tears, my eyes grow weak with sorrow, they fail me because of my foes. He's got his foes coming around him, hasn't he? This time they want to crucify him. He experiences that anguish, not because of his sin, but because of our sin.

[20:54] He felt what we feel, but far more than we feel. The weight of the sins of the world. He didn't even deserve it, did he? But he doesn't just feel the anticipation of it.

He chooses to face it himself, doesn't he? He lets his enemies nail him to the cross. They surround him, but they actually get him. He lets the judgment of God fall on him.

He doesn't just see that dark rain cloud of judgment coming over. He actually goes into that cloud.

He goes into darkness for us. And he does it so that we don't have to go through it.

Jesus sees hell closing in. And just as we think it's coming to us when he comes down from his rightful place in heaven and he steps into our place.

So when Jesus prays this prayer in Gethsemane or something like it, it looks like God doesn't kind of hear his weeping. It looks like he doesn't get delivered actually because he goes to the cross for us.

[22 : 04] but wonderfully his prayer is answered because God does raise him doesn't he? But it's answered in such a way where he was delivered in the end but first went through the wrath of God so that we didn't have to.

So in your sorrow, in your weeping for sin, in your recognition that the judgment of God is near. You could be left with that real lack of assurance.

I'm sure we've all been through one of those times where we don't really feel like God loves us or we're too sinful. Is God angry with me? Am I going to face judgment?

It's really horrible. No, we don't have to. There's a massive reassurance in this arm. Jesus' prayer for deliverance was answered. So when we trust in him, our cry for mercy is as sure as his to be answered.

He is the man of sorrows but he's the one who steps into our place as well. What a saviour we have.

[23 : 22] So we started with this question. What do you say when things go wrong? Now things will go wrong in this world like we said because it is broken.

Our pain, our anxiety, our grief. We could be resentful, we could pretend it's all fine, we could bury it, we could blame it, we might not have the words left. But when we're in deep anguish like David, physically and spiritually, we need words that express pain and assure us in it.

That's just what Psalm 5, Psalm 6 gives us. Assurance. God hears. God will deliver. He delivered in Jesus.

And if we're in him, he'll deliver us as well. So let's think about Joni Erickson from the start, this woman on the screen. she's known the depths of physical suffering.

And she's honest about the spiritual anguish that often comes with that. But she's also famous for quoting the Psalms because she loves what they offer.

[24 : 36] What she says here kind of captures not just how she views her suffering, but where she finds assurance in it. My pain is a sheep dog that keeps snapping at my heels to drive me down to the road of Calvary where otherwise I would not be naturally inclined to go.

She understands that her suffering is meant to drive her to the Saviour. But like David, she assured that he hears, Jesus hears, I will not listen to my pain, instead I call on the Lord in distress.

And he answers me. That's the kind of confidence that Psalm 6 offers. I call on him and he answers. Because of Jesus, the assurance of this psalm is yours.

It's rightfully yours. So take hold of it. Take hold of this assurance and know it. Let me pray. Father, Father, we are thankful that we've got words here when we are in anguish like David, when we're suffering physically.

Thank you that we have these words to express what we're feeling in a safe, relatable, faithful way. but Lord, we know that we are broken, we are in a broken world.

[26 : 13] So Father, please help our suffering to drive us to Jesus. we pray that we will know that his mercy, we will know that he has taken our judgment.

Thank you that he has gone through sorrow. Thank you for what he went through in the Garden of Gethsemane for us. And thank you that he actually faced the judgments!

on our behalf. Please assure us, Lord. Please give us hope. We pray that in Jesus' name. Amen.