

# Crying Night and Day

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Date: 21 April 2024

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ]     Good evening, brothers, sisters and friends. It's a joy, as always, to carry on the public worship. Just a reminder of the intimations from this morning. Again, there's still a few sheets on the back door intimation sheet, so please collect one on your way out if you haven't got one already.
- Just to remind ourselves, this month's opportunity is to pray daily for chances, opportunities to share your faith in our Lord.
- Again, the reminder that on the back of the sheet, there's a whole raft of WFM meetings coming up, some here and some in Stornoway. Just to note, especially the tea in the church, afternoon tea, that's the 26th at 3 o'clock.
- All ladies in the congregation invited to that. Also to note, on the 30th of this month, there's an open meeting, an open WFM meeting with WEC representatives attending.
- So afternoon tea on the 26th and the 30th, there is an open meeting. All the information is in the back of the sheet. We're here to worship God.
- [ 1 : 0 5 ]     Let's carry on that public worship. Singing, first of all, in the Scottish Psalter, Scottish Psalter and Psalm 88. Scottish Psalter, Psalm 88.
- You can sing verses 1 down to verse 9 of the psalm. Scottish Psalter, Psalm 88, verses 1 down to verse 9.
- If you've grabbed an intimation sheet, you'll see this is our text this evening. It's often called one of the darkest psalms, one of the darkest chapters in Scripture, and we'll see why later on.
- Psalm 88, verses 1 down to verse 9. Lord God, my Saviour, day and night, before thee cried have I. Before thee let my prayer come, give ear unto my cry.
- For trouble's great to fill my soul. My life draws nigh the grave. I'm counted with those that go down to pit and no strength have. Psalm 88, verses 1 to 9.
- [ 2 : 0 5 ]     To God's praise. Starting to sing. Thank you. Lord God, my Saviour, day and night, before thee I have died.
- Before thee let my day come, give ear unto my cry.
- For trouble's sake to fill my soul.
- My life draws nigh the grave. I'm counted with those that go down, to pit and no strength have.
- In triumph, I'm the dead I can. That sin and grave do I.
- [ 3 : 3 3 ]     That hope from I can fill my soul. Thou hast in memory.
- Thou hast me laid, and though hast built in deep, dark, dark, some case.
- Thy love lies hard on me, and though hast never hast be pressed for all thy wings.
- Thou hast to start from me, my friends. Thou hast to start from me, and I am so shut up, but I find all evasion for thee.

I reason of affection, my life warms doorfully.

[ 5 : 19 ] To thee, Lord, do I call and stretch, my hands continue and lean.

Let's join together in a word of prayer. Let's pray. Lord God, we thank you once more for this great privilege we have of worshipping your holy name this evening.

Help us at the start again of this time of joint worship, this time as we join together as brothers and sisters to worship a holy God, with friends joining alongside us to witness this worship.

We thank you, Lord, for the privilege we have of coming together and calling one another brother and sister. This privilege of coming together and knowing one another as those who have been sanctified, those who have been made clean, those who have been known and loved from eternity in the Father's hand.

Help us, Lord, then we ask for this short time together this evening to focus our hearts and our minds on what it is we're doing here. We come together to worship a holy, sovereign God.

[ 6 : 37 ] Help us not to become too comfortable in the process of our Sunday worship. Help us to be reminded again and again that we come before a God who is fully holy, who is totally sovereign.

We lose the ability in our own human language to describe the eternality of who and what you are. In all your ways you are perfect.

In all that you are, you are eternal. You are that you are. That you are Yahweh, the eternal covenant-keeping God, who needs nothing and who needs no one for your sustaining.

That you are the offer, you are the breath, you are the initiator of all that there is. Help us, then, with that mindset to draw close just now to this place and this time of worship.

We come just now not as unwilling and not as unknown servants. We come just now not as those without hope or without help. We come just now as sons and daughters, those of us here who know and who love our Saviour.

[ 7 : 50 ] We come just now as sons and daughters, brothers and sisters relying only on the finished work of our Saviour. We come this evening worshipping Him, giving Him praise, that we gather just now, not with hearts and minds that are downcast, but hearts and minds that should be lifted up with the thought that we have a Saviour who is in glory at your right hand, who makes constant intercession for us, a Saviour who knows us and who loves us, a Saviour who for the sake of His people, who suffered all the many temptations of this world, who for the love of His people, who was made like us in all ways apart from sin, who for the love of His people endured the cross, who for that joy that was set before Him, that joy of fulfilling the final step of obedience, for that joy of finding for Himself a people for His own possession, for the joy of His humble service to you, and for the joy of having for Himself His own people, redeemed and sanctified and glorified by His finished work, as to Him we come this evening.

And we bring just now before Him the concerns and burdens of our hearts. As we seek to spend some time looking at that psalm we've just sung, we acknowledge it as a psalm where the psalmist bears himself before you.

He hides nothing from you. We ask Lord we would do the same this evening, that at this time, in the quietness of our own hearts, our own minds, we bring before you the reality of what our story is, we bring before you the pitfalls of this past week, we bring before you the struggles we're going through just now.

You know us, you see us, we bring before you our personal worries, our personal struggles, our personal darkness, we bring before you struggles of health, both physical and mental, we bring before you family worries, worries of loved ones who were concerned for various reasons.

We bring before you wider worries, job worries perhaps, financial worries as things grow even more complicated. We bring before you the full variety of worries that assail us so often, that bring us down to the grave at times.

[ 10 : 19 ] We bring before you worries that are too big for us, that are too much for us, that we cannot begin to handle by ourselves. We bring just now before you any here who are currently or have recently or indeed this week to come, may go through difficult days, hard days, dark days, days where like the psalmist, they find themselves crying out, we ask that you would be with them, you comfort them, you remind them again and again that you are God, you do not change, your promises do not change, your mercy does not change, your love towards your people does not change.

We are reminded from the words of our Saviour as he prayed that glorious prayer, that because he is loved and because we are in him and him in us, that we are loved in the exact same manner as he is loved.

That we are loved eternally as your people. My God who delights in showing your loving kindness towards us. We pray just now for our wider gospel cause once more in this district.

We pray just now for North Tulsa, for every home, every croft, every family, every extended family member represented from the Glen to Gary.

Lord, this village is yours. And though we, as we heard this morning, we see much darkness, we see many dry bones. It belongs to you.

[ 11 : 54 ] We pray, Lord, that the gospel will go out in this village, we'll go out in power. We pray, Lord, for the fervorance of the gospel, for growth, gospel growth. We pray that not just for ourselves, we pray for the same for our friends next door, need our brothers and sisters next door.

We pray for them in their time of vacancy. Give them peace and give them comfort. We pray, Lord, for the gospel cause in North Tulsa as a whole. We never pray, Lord, just for ourselves.

But you're not bound by denomination nor congregation. You're not bound by minister or by ministry. But you have your plan in this place.

We ask that we would see days of growth and days of renewal, days of revival. Give us, we ask, that awakened sense, that awakened sense of the necessity and the need of what lies ahead.

Help us to slumber no more. Help us to rest no more. Help us to be aware that we have neighbours and friends and family in this place who at this moment are heading to a lost eternity.

[ 12 : 57 ] Lord, we ask you to give us that gospel urgency to bring to them in our words, in our lifestyles, in our conduct, to bring to them the life-giving gospel.

We'd point all around us to a saviour who has made full provision for them. If only they would come and cry out to him. Until we see days of blessing and days of refreshing, Lord, we ask for peace.

We ask for wisdom, pray for wisdom for ourselves as a congregation and all we seek to do, all we seek to achieve this year for the sake of the kingdom. We ask that you be in it and with us through it all.

You be glorified as we seek to see your name known from home to home and area to area in this village. Lord, encourage us in this day of small things.

We thank you that the gospel is growing and flourishing across the world. We remember this morning of the work in Central Asia. We pray, Lord, for the continued work in that area, that vast area of so many people, groups and nations and languages, and yet you are saving your people in that place.

[ 14 : 09 ] Remember again, Muriel in Cambodia. We thank you for her. We pray, Lord, you bless her and help her to settle back in to the mission of that great nation.

I shall just return home for a few years to serve you there once more. We also remember once more the Govan plant, the Govan church there, as you work so amazingly through the means you have given your people there.

A congregation with so many cultures, so many languages being spoken, and yet we are your people praising you of one heart and one voice.

Lord, we ask you to bless them and provide for them a settled minister, a settled pastor, who would lead them and who would guide them and who would encourage them. Help us, Lord, this evening to not leave this place just having grown in our head knowledge, but help us to leave this place having grown in our love and our praise towards you, and who you are and what you have done.

We pray, Lord, for our wider congregation. We pray again for those who are missing from our number today, those on holiday and those who are away just now. We ask, Lord, for times and a time of rest for them, a time of peace for them.

[ 15 : 25 ] Lord, you'd return to us refreshed and there to serve you once more in this place. Help us, Lord. Keep us humble, we ask. Remind us that all that we have is a gift from you, the giver of all good gifts, pillar to the wider gospel cause in our nation.

Across the dominations, every gathering which seeks to worship you in spirit and in truth, ourselves, our friends and the FPs, our friends and brothers and sisters, and the continuing, the RPs and so on and so on.

The Baptist and dependent churches, Lord, you know the full number of your people in our nation. We ask, Lord, you would bless them. We ask, Lord, you would encourage and promote the gospel cause.

We would see days of gospel flourishing, see days of revival. Until these days come, help us to be patient. Help us to be prayerful.

Help us to be peaceful in our souls. That we worship a sovereign God. And all things are fully under and in your control. Help us this evening to focus on your word.

[ 16 : 34 ] Forgive us our sin. And help us as we come to look at passages which are difficult and sections which are hard at times. To be faithful to your word.

And to be honest as we look to it. It's called these things in the saving work of our Lord Jesus. In his sake and for his name. Amen.

Let's read two sections. First of all, reading Psalm 88. A book of Psalms and Psalm 88.

A book of Psalms and Psalm 88. And afterwards we can turn to John chapter 14. But first of all, a book of Psalms and Psalm 88.

Let's hear again the word of God. O Lord, God of my salvation. I cry day and night before you. Let my prayer come before you.

[ 17 : 40 ] Incline your ear to my cry. For my soul is full of troubles. And my life draws near to Sheol. I am counted among those who go down to the pit.

I am a man who has no strength. Like one set loose among the dead. Like the slain that lie in the grave. Like those who you remember no more.

For they are cut off from your hand. You have put me in the depths of the pit. In the regions dark and deep. Your wrath lies heavy upon me. And you overwhelm me with all your waves.

Selah. You have caused my companions to shun me. And you have made me a horror to them. I am shut in so that I cannot escape. My eye grows dim through sorrow.

Every day I call upon you, O Lord. I spread out my hands to you. Do you work wonders for the dead? Do the departed rise up to praise you? Selah.

[ 18 : 38 ] Is your steadfast love declared in the grave? Or your faithfulness in Abaddon? Are your works wonders known in the darkness? Or your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?

But I, O Lord, cry to you. In the morning my prayer comes before you. O Lord, why do you cast my soul away?

Why do you hide your face from me? Afflicted and close to death from my youth up. I suffer your terrors. I am helpless. Your wrath has swept over me.

Your dreadful assaults destroy me. They surround me like a flood all day long. They close in on me together. You have caused my beloved and my friend to shun me.

My companions have become darkness. Darkness. Now reading in the Gospel of John chapter 14. John chapter 14.

[ 19 : 36 ] John chapter 14. John 14. Just a few verses. John 14.

Verses 1 down to verse 7. Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me.

In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself.

For where I am, you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going. Thomas said to him, Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?

Jesus said to him, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also.

[ 20 : 35 ] From now on, you do know him and have seen him. Amen. For his holy and his perfect word. Let's again sing to God's praise.

Carrying on our singing from that same psalm. Psalm 88. From the Scottish Psalter. Scottish Psalter. Psalm 88. This time verses 10 down to verse 18 of the psalm.

Psalm 88. Verses 10 down to verse 18. Psalm 88. Psalm 88. Verse 10. What thou show wonders to the dead, shall they rise and they bless.

Shall in the grave thy love be told, and death thy faithfulness. Psalm 88. Verses 10 to 18. To God's praise. Psalm 88. Psalm 88.

In the grave thy love be told, and death thy faithfulness. Psalm 88. In the grave thy love be told, and death thy faithfulness. Psalm 88. In the grave thy faithfulness. Psalm 88. In the grave thy faithfulness. Psalm 88. Psalm 88. In the grave thy faithfulness. Psalm 88.

[ 21 : 40 ] In the grave thy faithfulness. Psalm 88. In the grave thy faithfulness. Psalm 88. In the grave thy faithfulness. Psalm 88. In the grave thy faithfulness. Psalm 88. In the grave thy faithfulness. Psalm 88. In the grave thy grave thy love be told, and death thy faithfulness.

Psalm 88. In the grave thy faithfulness. Psalm 88. In the grave thy faithfulness. God bless you.

Thank you.

And I strike this for me. This last time I am from my youth, I bet he am to die.

Thy tenors I have for mankind, this time it fearfully.

[ 23 : 40 ] The dreadful fierceness of thy heart, wide open, read the whole.

Thy tenors I have for mankind, this time it fearfully.

For I am not my feet every day, like water lifted cold.

I'm gathering together, they have come past as my soul.

My friends, thou hast put back on me, an invited king of.

[ 25 : 04 ] And those that night are great and swear to darkness, this we do.

Let's turn back to the chapter we had in the book of Psalms, Psalm 88. Book of Psalms, Psalm 88.

Taking the whole Psalm together this evening. Psalm 88. Taking the whole Psalm. Taking the whole Psalm.

The nation, of course, these are Psalms written to be sung. Israel has sang these Psalms. And we, of course, as a church have sang these Psalms from the very start till now.

So it's an unusual thing that this is a man who has been honest enough to bear his soul, not just to the Lord, but to bear his soul to those around him, to his peers, to his friends, to the whole nation.

[ 26 : 40 ] Quite often, and perhaps rightly so, this Psalm is often called one of the darkest, humanly speaking, one of the darkest chapters in all of Scripture.

You can see that as you read through it, you see it gets worse and worse and worse, doesn't it? Darker and darker and darker and darker. And you think, why is this Psalm even here?

Why is this Psalm even here? There's no hope in this Psalm. There's no help in this Psalm. In fact, the whole Psalm seems one long rant. One long, anger-filled, tear-filled rant and diatribe from this man as he prays and cries out to God.

And if you're honest, perhaps, at times it's quite an uncomfortable read. You think, oh man, maybe this doesn't feel right. It doesn't feel like this should be in here. It feels a bit too close to the bone.

A bit too dark. He's been a bit too close to being angry towards God. And you think, how is this in Scripture? Oh, brothers and sisters and friends, this evening we give praise to God that this Psalm is in Scripture.

[ 27 : 55 ] Because perhaps unlike the Psalmist, for us it is often hard as believers, and speaking just now especially to those of us who know and who love the Lord, it is hard for us to be as honest or as open as this Psalmist is.

And perhaps we'll see this evening, perhaps we share many of the feelings, many of the conclusions of this Psalmist, but we can't outwardly, we can never think to publicly say it, but we have it here for us.

The truth is, and brothers and sisters, you know this more than I can tell you, you know this fine well, that there are times, indeed perhaps lengths of time, when life is just difficult.

And believers, we know ourselves that there are times our lives are just equally as difficult. We've said before that the Gospel is not a health and wealth, it's not a prosperity Gospel we preach.

Nowhere in Scripture do we see, become a Christian and have an easy life, have a fun life, become a Christian and have no more worries, have no more troubles, have no more problems.

[ 29 : 15 ] We said before, in fact, Jesus says the opposite. Follow me, and the world will hate you. Follow me, and face trials, and tribulations, and face pain.

Truth is, we ourselves are sinners, we are still prone to sin, but more than that, we live in a world that is full of sin. And if we aren't harming ourselves by our sin, those around us are harming us by their sin.

Either way, we are in a dark world, and we know that. Five minutes looking at the news, any given day, tells us of how distraught, and how distressing, and how just dark our world is.

We come to Psalm 88 then, and we're shown even the depths of the darkness of this man. A few things before we start looking in depth. This is a man who is one of the sons of Korah.

This is a man who, we see him here, Heman, he is a man who is resident in the temple, who'd have been praising in the temple, who'd have had a home, quite literally, as part of a temple, whose everyday duty, and duties revolved around praising God.

[ 30 : 29 ] This is a man who knew God, a man who served God, who had the privilege of being, and serving, and living close to God's visible presence on earth at that time.

So in many ways, this is a man who is close to the Lord, who knows the Lord, who serves the Lord, and yet this is a man who is finding himself, and he throughout his whole life, has found himself going through times of great darkness.

Now, I know I don't have to say this, and I know I don't, but just to say that loud, I've never found this with yourselves, but I have found that other Christians, especially some Christians, perhaps my own age, surprisingly, or a wee bit older, who have this assumption that because they're a Christian, they will never face dark times.

Because they're a Christian, they won't go through hard situations. Because they're a Christian, it means they'll never face health worries, physical or mental. Who think because they're a Christian, they'll never be distraught, they'll never be depressed, they'll never face this or face that.

And sadly, they believe that until they encounter it for themselves. And then they see that we live in a world where we all face pretty much all the same troubles and trials.

[ 31 : 56 ] That's what we find here in this psalm. Just three very simple headings to help us go through this psalm briefly this evening. First of all, the reasons and feelings of pain.

So the reasons and feelings of pain. Then, well, first of all, the reasons of pain, we could say. We get two points. Then the feelings of pain.

So the reasons of pain. Then the feelings of pain. And then finally, hope in the pain. So the reasons of pain, the feelings of pain.

Then hope in the pain. First of all, from this psalm, what do we see are some of the psalmist's reasons for his suffering, his reasons for pain.

As we go through these, we know these are not exhaustive. They're not all the reasons we have as Christians for suffering. As we go through this, we are to think to ourselves and to hopefully feel a sigh of relief.

[ 32 : 58 ] As you see, that the Lord not only understands, but in fact, the Lord included this chapter in his word. He included this psalm, this prayer, this cry of this man to show us it is okay to feel these things.

It is okay to go through these things. So the reasons for pain. The three main areas, three main reasons the psalm gives us. We can group them together.

The first reason we see is mental and physical turmoil. Mental and physical turmoil. Verse three, we see first of all here.

Verse three, for my soul is full of troubles and my life draws near to Sheol. My soul is full of troubles and my life draws near, quite literally, of course, to the place of the grave.

My soul is full of troubles and my life draws near to the grave. Even more distressing, even more sad, that drawing near to the grave is not a one-time thing.

[ 34 : 09 ] The grammar there is an ongoing reality. He is saying again and again, daily we could say, if not weekly, a month, but daily, it feels like I have got nothing but trouble in my life and daily it feels like my very soul, my very life, my very being is being drawn down to the grave.

Such are the troubles. This is a man and we see plenty of evidence in this psalm, quite simply, a man who is going through complete mental anguish, complete mental turmoil.

The truth is, for the believer, we will face the same mental anguish as those around us at times. It is a false gospel, it's a dangerous gospel, it's a truly damaging gospel that tells us if you're a Christian, you will face no mental anguish ever.

And if you are, it's because of some fault in your walk, some fault in your faith. Despite being just wrong, it goes against the face of scripture, of the prophets, it goes against the face of Christian experience.

from Knox to Calvin to Spurgeon, to name but a few, these are men who clearly and who quite boldly write about the mental anguish they go through.

[ 35 : 45 ] Really, up until the 1700s, 1800s perhaps, there was no shame in discussing these things. It's only for us, when the Victorian age began, in force, these conversations died away.

before that, the Lord's people discussed openly how hard it was at times to live in this world, the depression they faced, the anxiety they faced, and so on and so on and so on.

I'm very careful naming conditions because I don't want to shorten it too much. But mental anguish, taking in the full raft of conditions, this man has known mental anguish, his soul is full of troubles, and every day it feels like his life is ebbing away.

I'm thinking of one Christian friend who, this is his favourite psalm, his favourite chapter in scripture, and he wouldn't say it publicly perhaps for the sake of others, but if you ask him why his favourite chapter, his favourite section in scripture, quite simply he'll tell you because it gives him permission to be honest, to the Lord.

We worry, I can't say that, and my prayers, I can't pray like that, this Thursday, again the prayer meeting half seven, seven I should say, seven o'clock, hasn't changed, prayer meeting at seven, Thursday, open to everyone to come along to, we'll be seeing what is healthy prayer, what is healthy prayer, what does it look like?

[ 37 : 19 ] Well healthy prayer here is honest prayer, the Lord knows us, the Lord knows us, he sees us, he understands us, there is no point not sharing things with him, if we're feeling it we're supposed to share it with him, the Lord is able to withstand what we're saying and we say it like the psalmist here, he is honest and there's no hint here of him being disrespectful towards his Lord, he's being honest, I feel like I am dying, Lord, help.

Brother, dear sister, if this is resonating with you, then you find a friend here in the psalmist, as he says alongside you, my soul is full of troubles and my life draws near to the grave.

But you also find a friend, not just in the psalmist, but you find a friend alongside your brothers and sisters here. We are a congregation who are seeking to serve one another and we're told, indeed we're commanded to bear one another's burdens, are we not?

That should be what we want to do, that should be what we desire to do. And if you haven't yet done it, please do share with a brother or sister, pick up the phone to the manse, you'll have a number now, and share that perhaps things are hard, perhaps things aren't great, and ask for prayer, we can pray together, we can sit together, we can cry together, whatever the Lord leads us to do in that situation, but share your burdens, because I can guarantee that there are some here this evening and you know, perhaps friends who are missing who will listen online later, you will know about verse three, what it means for you, your soul is full of troubles and your life draws near to the grave.

But with mental anguish there's also of course physical anguish, we see that perhaps in verse 15, afflicted and close to death from my youth up, I suffer your terrors, I am helpless.



[ 39 : 43 ] The word afflicted there, it gives a sense of some form perhaps of a more physical affliction than mental or spiritual. So the sense here is that this poor psalmist, as well as being mentally in anguish, physically there's also something wrong and physically he's had this situation from his youth all the way up.

Now again, just like the mental anguish, brothers and sisters, I don't know your exact physical health situations, but I know that everyone here this evening, whether ourselves personally or connected very closely to us, there are those who we love and those who we know and we ourselves perhaps and we are facing hard, tear-inducing, pain-inducing, diagnoses and medical situations which are complicated and which wear us down, which worry us, perhaps our own medical conditions and we are scared for the future, medical conditions of loved ones and we are scared for what's ahead.

I'm very careful here because I don't want to enter into your pain because I can't, I can't. You know yourself, your own situations and perhaps you like the psalmist can say, if not from a youth up, then in recent years you can say that you or someone you know and love is afflicted and close to death and from your youth up you're suffering the terror and you feel completely without help.

We said you have a friend and a psalmist, that is you, a friend, a brother, a sister and a congregation. Brothers and sisters, for every one of us there's greater news than that.

If you know mental and physical suffering, you have not a friend only in the psalmist, a friend in us, we have a friend of course in our saviour who endured what it was to be human, who suffered in every way like we suffer, who knew extents of mental anguish we were never entered into, who felt physical anguish we can't begin to understand.

[ 42 : 14 ] You have a friend, a saviour who knows what it is to be in mental anguish, so much so he is bleeding and sweating blood, his capillaries are bursting under the stress and blood is oozing through his skin, such is his mental anguish.

And one who knew physical anguish, a saviour who knows and who cares. The second reason we see is abandonment. Just two examples, a number of examples here, but two examples about how abandonment has caused him much pain.

Verse 8 and verse 18. Verse 8, you have caused my companions to shun me, you have made me a horror to them, I am shut in so that I cannot escape.

And verse 18, you have caused my beloved and my friend to shun me, my companions have become darkness. The next question is, do you know abandonment?

Do you know that sense of loneliness? Brothers and sisters, I do try and, I hope you know, I do try and interact and look at you and share with you, but I think for this sermon tonight that I'll be just brushing over you, I don't want to focus on anyone too long, I don't know your stories, so just thank yourselves, keep the name of the Lord.

[ 43 : 39 ] Do you know abandonment? Like the psalmist here, do you know what it is, have you felt what it is for companions and loved ones to leave you, to abandon you, to perhaps ridicule you, to shun you, to become like darkness to you?

We think of family situations, think of family breakups, marriage breakups, sibling breakups, sibling issues, wider family complications.

Do you know that in your life? Complications and friendships which have left you detached and feeling alone, these are no small things.

They cause the psalmist great distress, they cause us great distress. Have you had parents, perhaps, abandon or at least neglect duties towards you?

Have others sinned against you? The full complication of life in this fallen world is such that we can't even give half the examples of what could apply here.

[ 44 : 56 ] quite simply, have you or do you know it is to be abandoned? Well, the psalmist does.

Your brother here, he does, writing these a few thousands of years ago, thousands of miles away. This man like you and I, he cried out to the Lord and he cries out saying that they've left me, they've shunned me, they've abandoned me, they've become darkness to me.

If you go to ESV, the church Bible, you'll see in verse 18, the Hebrews are a wee bit complicated in verse 18. So either his companions have become darkness, or we see it here, or darkness has become my only companion.

It's in poetic forms, but it reads actually both ways and both meanings are probably supposed to be true. It's a play on words, he's saying my companions have become darkness, and darkness has become my companion.

The third issue here is one that's even more complicated for us to understand, but one I am sure we've all, as those of us who know and who love the Lord, have dealt with. Verses 16 down to verse 17, but the whole psalm is this, the weight of the Lord.

[ 46 : 24 ] Verses 16 and verse 17, your wrath has swept over me, your dreadful assaults destroy me, they surround me like a flood all day long, they close in on me together.

And you think, man, how can he love the Lord and speak to the Lord like this? How can he love the Lord and speak to the Lord and say, you've done this to me? Why is this happening?

How can someone know the Lord and love the Lord, but yet speak so bluntly to the Lord? The Lord has left this psalm in his word.

We might be offended by it, we might be bothered by it, but the Lord clearly is not. God is sovereign. God is God. He is Yahweh.

He is who he is. He is that he is. He is the eternal one. He is able to hear the honest words of his beloved people speaking to him.

[ 47 : 24 ] He is able to receive that. It doesn't hurt him. Job, we see that again and again. The prophets speak to the Lord so clearly again and again.

I think back to my friend who has this as his favourite chapter. It's a point he always makes in discussing it. He'll say, along the lines of it gives him permission to feel this way.

Also the psalm gives him permission in his prayers to pray honest prayers to the Lord and say, why is this happening? Or why is this happening again?

Why is my mind this way again? Why is my body this way again? Why is my family situation this way again? This is impossible.

This is hard. I can't do this. And however form your prayer might take. We deal with confusing providences.

[ 48 : 24 ] We deal with heavy providences. The sin is not in being honest in your thoughts to the Lord.

The sin is not taking your thoughts to the Lord. In not taking your honest prayers to him and not relying on him. We'll see that more just in a second. And in this we see the feelings of pain, don't we?

Tears, agony, tiredness, loneliness. I won't dwell on these, but if you can identify with that just now, then you are in good company with not just the psalmist, but many, indeed, most of the Lord's people.

the question is, yes, there's much pain, there's much darkness in this psalm. So where's the hope? Where's the hope?

Where's the hope in the pain of this psalm? We have seen two points, two broad points of hope we find in this psalm.

[ 49 : 33 ] The first one's quite obvious. The first one is the psalm itself. What is a psalm? What is a psalm? A psalm is a melodic prayer.

Every psalm is a prayer. Every psalm is a prayer of praise, or a prayer of distress, or, like we have here, an honest prayer of a broken man.

This is a prayer. This is words this man has brought before the Lord. And we see here all the agony, all the distress of this man.

He's a praying man. He still comes before the Lord. Again, the worst thing to do when life becomes impossible.

That's one thing saying it, quite an other thing when you experience it, when life becomes impossible, when the health situation, physical or mental, when the family situation, when your personal situation, whatever it might be, becomes dark and difficult and impossible.

[ 50 : 42 ] At times, if we're honest, our own sin nature, I'm sure, helped along, of course, by the evil one, our inclination is to go away from the Lord at times, to hide away, to become inward, and really the truth is, in times of distress, in times of darkness, we're to follow the example of this man, and to lift up our voices, whether we have the words, literally have the words or not, just pray.

Whether we can't form our words, pray in our hearts, if we can't form the words in our hearts, just sit before the Lord and trust as his word tells us, that the spirit, he knows and he understands and he interprets the groans and the cries of our heart, but come to the Lord nonetheless.

That is the first and the most glorious part of hope we have here. This is a man, through all his distress, years of turmoil, he comes to the Lord.

And also note how he addresses God. Note how he addresses the Lord. Verse 1.

O Lord, God of my salvation. O Lord, God of my salvation. Now, the first element there is perhaps not too obvious.

[ 52 : 19 ] We might skip past it. It's that first word, that first letter, O. We covered this before in a different context, looking at Isaiah 55, that ho everyone comes, that expression O is the same sense here.

That O isn't in the Hebrew. That O is there in English to help us to understand the tone in the Hebrew of this first verse, this first phrase, is a cry.

It's a pleading cry. That is the grammar being used, the language being used. This is a man who is crying out to a God he knows will listen to.

Perhaps he feels far away from God. Perhaps he feels abandoned by God and troubled by God. Perhaps he feels clueless as to what's going on in God's providence, yet he cries out knowing the Lord will hear him.

Perhaps he doesn't feel like it anymore or think about it anymore, but he knows the Lord will hear him. Brothers and sisters, our faith is not about how we feel. It's not about how we think.

[ 53 : 28 ] It's not about how we feel towards certain situations. God is true regardless. God keeps his promises regardless. And the psalmist, we are sure from this psalm, he probably feels quite the opposite from praying, but he believes, he trusts God's promises and he prays and he pleads out.

Who's he prayed to? Lord, that capital L-O-R-D, Yahweh, O Yahweh, God of my salvation, O Yahweh, he cries out to the covenant keeping God.

Why? Because he is there saying, God, you have promised all you've promised and I trust, I don't feel it, I don't think it, I don't see it just now, I trust you will keep your promises, your promises towards me.

Believer, God keeps his promises never to leave, nor abandon you. He gives the promises that we read in John 14, he has gone, our saviour, to prepare a place for us, he will come back and take us home one day.

These are sure and certain promises. There are times the promises are all we have to cling on to. There is nothing in our immediate vicinity that gives us assurance, but we look forward to his promises, or look back to his promises and remind ourselves, he does not change.

[ 54 : 55 ] He is Yahweh, O Yahweh, God of my salvation, my salvation. He is not some distant, uncaring, cold God out there in the universe somewhere.

This is a man praying to God of his salvation, the God he knows, he has prayed to in days of joy and days of peace, the one who has rescued him.

Dear brother, dear sister, when we lift up our voices in prayer, we pray to one who we know has rescued us. Our saviour promises what?

He will never leave nor forsake a single one of us. And we cling and lay hold on that promise. God of peace.

There are feelings of pain. There are times of great suffering in the life of the believer. There are times of distress and so on in the life of the believer.

[ 55 : 55 ] And there are times like the psalmist, there is nothing left but our prayer, our cry, our longing sigh to God, and the hope, the deep hope of the believer.

Whatever else happens, whatever else might be true, we have a God who does not change. We have a saviour who is with us, who has promised to be with us, who saw us, who knew us in time and before time, who set his mission to come, to live that perfect life, to die, to be raised again, to ascend into glory, to redeem us for his own people, to keep us and not lose us, a single one of us, to have us all as part of his kingdom, as part of his people.

That is our hope. And all that is true, but never forget, it is hard. And it's okay to say it's hard.

It's okay to say that this is impossible at times. It's why we have not just a Lord and saviour who loves us, it's why he has given us the church, he has given us one another, and please, please make use of that.

I know it's not part of our culture, perhaps. Our culture, if we're being honest, is one of dealing with things in our way, and believe me, I am putting myself in with that, I'm bad enough for that, but dealing with things quietly, internally, working it out.

[ 57 : 26 ] Brothers and sisters, we are commanded to share our burdens, therefore we must do it. Also commanded to bear one another's burdens, therefore we must do it. And by doing that we will grow together as brothers and sisters in the Lord.

A final thought, and it's the obvious thought to make, but it has to be made. All that I know was for the believers here this evening, but one thing is true, for everything we've said, every turmoil, every trouble, every worry, friends, those who as of yet can't say you know nor love Jesus, you face these same troubles, family worries, personal worries, mental worries, physical worries, financial worries, and so on, and so on.

And the Christian, in all of our troubles, the Christian still has their basis in the hope of the finished work of Jesus. The obvious question is, what is your hope based on?

When the troubles and pains and worries, the impossible worries of life, bear down on you, and you are strong, but eventually we all reach the end of our strength.

What then? What then? Instead, come, come to find a saviour who tells you that he will take your burdens, who tells you, as we read in John 14, who tells us not to fear, not because there's nothing to be scared of, who tells us not to fear because he is in full control, he is in full charge, of all things.

[ 59 : 06 ] Please come, come and find your hope and your foundation in a saviour who doesn't promise an easy life, but promises a life spent with him, an eternity with him afterwards.

Let's bow our heads in a word of prayer. Lord, we thank you for the gift of your word. We ask you bless it to us. We pray once more for the reality, we've acknowledged this evening, the reality that there are many ways and many times in which your people find themselves suffering.

Lord, we ask you would learn from the example of the psalmist this evening that we would learn from him and we would find ourselves worshipping despite the pain and find ourselves bringing all things to you in prayer, speaking honestly before you.

We thank you, Lord, for the gathered group of your people here. Help us to share one another's burdens, to come alongside one another, to lift one another up. Help us to come to sing our final item of praise.

We do so of hearts and minds full of understanding. Thank you, Lord, for the gift of singing your word and knowing, Lord, the words we sing are true and perfect and bring you honour and bring you praise.

[ 60 : 18 ] Help us as we leave this place to go out in safety, to go out in peace and to begin this new week seeking to serve our saviour well. It's all these things in and through and for his perfect namesake.

Amen. We can conclude in Sing Psalms and Psalm 13. Sing Psalms, Psalm 13.

That's on page 14 of the Blue Psalm books. Sing Psalms, Psalm 13 on page 14. Sing Psalms, Psalm 13.

How long will you forget me, Lord? Will you forget always? How long, Lord, will you hide your face and turn from me your gaze? Just read the last verse here, the last verse 5 and verse 6.

But still I trust your constant love. You save and set me free. With joy I will extol the Lord who has been good to me.

[ 61 : 19 ] Psalm 13, the whole psalm, the God's praise. How long will you forget who you are?

Will you forget the ways? How long, Lord, will you hide your face and turn from me your ears?

How long will you die of formation in triumph and over O Lord, thy God, consider me, and give me divine.

Light up my eyes, for I will see the spirit of those to die.

Then would my hand be declared, at last I let them know.

[ 63 : 26 ] And so my force would scream for joy, to see my own, my own.

But still I cast your palms, stand up. You sing and set me free.

With joy I will extol the Lord, who has been good to me.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God with ever, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, with you now and forevermore. Amen.