

Psalm 38

Psalms 38:1 [New King James] *“O LORD, do not rebuke me in Your wrath, nor chasten me in Your hot displeasure!”*

As a child might cry to his physical father, so King David is crying out to his Heavenly Father, the Creator God, saying “do not punish me while you are angry.”

David acknowledged that he needed correction and deserved to be punished, but he asked God to include mercy in His discipline.

Like any child, we are free to ask for mercy, but we should not deny that we deserve discipline.

Luke 18:10-14 [New King James] *“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’ And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”*

Jesus Christ gives us a clear illustration of the approach we must have to our Creator God.

Hebrews 12:5-11 [New King James] *“And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: ‘My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.’ If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”*

The discipline that we receive from our loving Creator God may be grievous, both physically and mentally, as David illustrates in this Psalm.

Psalms 38:2-11 [New King James] *“For Your arrows pierce me deeply, and Your hand presses me down. There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your anger, nor any health in my bones because of my sin. For my iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds are foul and festering because of my foolishness. I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long. For my loins are full of inflammation, and there is no soundness in my flesh. I am feeble and severely broken; I groan because of the turmoil of my heart. Lord, all my desire is before You; and my sighing is not hidden from You. My heart pants, my strength fails me; as for the light of my eyes, it also has gone from me. My loved ones and my friends stand aloof from my plague, and my relatives stand afar off.”*

David saw his condition as discipline from God because of his sins.

Although God does **not** always allow physical illness to discipline us, these verses along with other scriptures indicates that He does in certain circumstances, [**2 Corinthians 12:7-10**].

Psalms 38:12-15 [New King James] *“Those also who seek my life lay snares for me; those who seek my hurt speak of destruction, and plan deception all the day long. But I, like a deaf man, do not hear;*

and I am like a mute who does not open his mouth. Thus I am like a man who does not hear, and in whose mouth is no response. For in You, O LORD, I hope; You will hear, O Lord my God.”

It is extremely difficult to be silent when other people tear us down to elevate themselves, for we want to protect our reputation.

We find it difficult to say or do nothing while people assault what is very precious to us, our faith in the Creator God, for example.

But we do not need to lash out in revenge or justify our position, we can trust God to protect our reputation.

Jesus Christ was silent before His accusers, [Luke 23:9-10]. He left His case in God’s hands, [1 Peter 2:21-24].

That is a good place to leave our case also.

Psalms 38:17-20 [New King James] *“For I am ready to fall, and my sorrow is continually before me. For I will declare my iniquity; I will be in anguish over my sin. But my enemies are vigorous, and they are strong; and those who hate me wrongfully have multiplied. Those also who render evil for good, they are my adversaries, because I follow what is good.”*

David’s sins, however serious, were those of a man whose fundamental choice was to “*pursue what is good*” [Acts 13:22], and it is this choice that David always made that rankles with the unbeliever [John 15:18-21] when we make the same choice.

Psalms 38:21-22 [New King James] *“Do not forsake me, O LORD; O my God, be not far from me! Make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation!”*

This final plea, with its pathetic urgency, shows that David’s capacity to wait on God’s time, mentioned in other Psalms, [Psalms 25:3, 5, 21; Psalms 27:14; Psalms 37:7, 9, 34, etc.]

This waiting owed nothing to a placid disposition or a situation well in hand, but everything to a Creator God he knew intimately through the active indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

David knew God’s name [Yahweh, verse 21a] by a covenant [by God] and as Master and Saviour, [verse 22b].

This intimate relationship is exactly how the Creator God desires all human beings, made in His image, then through this relationship become a very reflection of His own character.

Genesis 1:26-27 [New King James] *“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”*

The Hebrew word translated “*image*” is “*tselem*” meaning resemblance, shadow, outward form, material representation.

All human beings are born in God’s image.

The Hebrew word translated “*likeness*” is “*demûwth*” with a very different meaning, refers to manner, attributes, character.

As we know, character is **only** formed by a close relationship with a person whose character we wish to emulate, over a period of time.

This is why the Creator God has given us life, a period of time in a physical body, during which we can choose to be moulded by Him, [Isaiah 64:8] through an active presence of the Holy Spirit, [Who is also God] within us, developing the “*fruits*” of the Holy Spirit [Galatians 5:22-25] which are the very characteristics of the Creator God.

All this is made possible by our accepting Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Lord, [John 3:16-17].