

# “THE AGONY AND THE ECSTASY”

Psalm 38:1-22

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## INTRODUCTION

We would be hard put to find a more agonizing psalm than this one! I became almost depressed as I studied it. When is there relief? I kept asking myself! Here is a brief summary:

This is the third penitential Psalm so far along with 6 and 32. David faces several issues here:

- 1) He suffers from a burden of guilt (1-4, 18).
- 2) He also experiences some difficult disease (3, 5-8, 10,17).
- 3) In addition, his friends have become estranged (11).
- 4) His enemies are plotting his ruination (12, 16, 19-20)
- 5) He is silent and does not respond (13-14)

There is an interaction between mental and physical anguish and suffering: mental suffering inhibits and **weakens the strength of the body; bodily suffering weakens the mental resolve and courage. To make matters worse**, those who could have given him comfort and encouragement have forsaken him. Perowne comments:

*The utter loneliness, never so hard to bear as in such a season of bodily and mental prostration; the (3, 5-8, 10). (3, 5-8, 10).weary couch never so weary as when no hand is there to smooth it; the pain of the disease far more acutely felt, because none offered sympathy; the tears of conscience and of the imagination aggravated, because they had to be endured in solitude. Suffering seems here to have reached its height. But out of the very midst of the furnace the sufferer can say, ‘Lord, before Thee is all my desire – in the Lord Jehovah, have I hoped.’*

As we go through the **agony** found in this Psalm, it will be nearly overwhelming! But the hints of the **ecstasy** that follows makes ours only tolerable but also blessed.

## **YOU MUST MOVE FROM AGONY TO ECSTASY IN YOUR CHRISTIAN WALK!**

### I. THE AGONY: DAVID’S BURDENS

#### A. The Burden of Guilt (1-4, 18)

1. Wrath and Anger—necessary from a thrice holy God! (1)
2. Rebuke and Chastening (1)
3. Sharp arrows sunk in and a heavy hand upon (2)
4. Painfully aware of divine indignation and of his personal sin and foolishness (3, 5).
5. Flooded—overwhelmed—with iniquities; overburdened with them (4)
6. Confession of iniquity; full of anxiety over sin (18)

**What a burden sin is in the life of the believer!** But that is not all; he suffers from some horrible disease that affects his entire body and being!

#### B. The Burden of Physical Ailments (3, 5-8, 10)

1. No Soundness (wholeness) in flesh (v. 3, 5); no health (*shalom*; completeness) in bones (3)
2. Smelly and festering wounds (5)
3. Bowed down and prostrate on the ground-- mourning all Day (6)

4. Burning fever in the loins (7)
  5. Numb and crushed (8a)
  6. An agitated heart full of tumult; palpitations of heart (8b; 10a)
  7. Failing strength (10b)
  8. Dimmed eyesight (10c; no more sparkle in the eyes)
  9. *Established* (ready) for a falling (17a)
  10. Continual pain (17b)
- C. The burden of estranged associations (11)
1. Loved ones and friends stand aloof – opposite – my “plague.”
  2. Relatives stand at a distance.
- D. The Burden of Vicious Enemies (12; 16-17; 19-20)
1. They *seek* me (unlike my friends) to take my life (soul) and to injure me and to threaten destruction and ruin and to meditate treachery (12)
  2. They *rejoice* over my trouble and eagerly wait for my *foot to slip* so they can *magnify themselves* over me (16)
  3. They are vigorous and full of life, and are strong like bones, and are many (19).
  4. They hate me deceptively-- wrongfully (19b).
  5. They repay evil to me for my good toward them (20).
  6. They are my enemies because I diligently pursue **Good** (20).
- E. The burden of the his silence (13-14)
1. He, like a deaf man, does not hear.
  2. He, like a dumb man, does not speak-- he offers no arguments.

*Such is the agony of David; such are his burdens. They are indeed profound! What will he do?*  
 In the midst of his agony, he pursues ecstasy.

## II. THE ECSTASY: DAVID’S RELIEF

- A. His Cry for Mercy (1) [please remove your anger in your chastening hand-- I repent]
- B. His groaning too deep for words—**desire, sighing**—Rom. 8:26-27; all is before God, nothing is hidden from God (9)
- C. His waiting upon God for his answer (15)-- Notice the divine names: Yahweh, Lord, God.
- D. His cry for God’s nearness-- “Do not forsake me.” (21)
- E. His cry for quick help-- “make haste”; Lord, my Salvation! (22).

## CONCLUSION

Notice that David did not answer back his enemies (13-14). It is clear that David’s enemies are doing a lot of talking; but David by way of contrast is both “deaf and dumb” as we see in the next verse-- a striking contrast that reminds us of Christ’s example in I Peter 2:18-25 and the pattern believers are encouraged to follow in patient endurance of ill-treatment – especially when it is undeserved.

*Call out to your God—not your enemies nor to your estranged friends.*

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