

## Life Lessons from the Psalms

### Cry of Why

#### *Are You "Up Against It"?*

My mother was good. She brought us to church. She was kind and gentle. Mom was faithful to our dad and I never heard her utter a bad word to him or about him. My mom loved her own mom who was a widow and was good to her. She picked up the different elderly women from our church and took them grocery shopping. At 42, she found out she had breast cancer. The treatments were brutal back then and I often heard her vomiting from the chemotherapy. She grew frail and over the course of three years she was often on the verge of death but then would recover. My mom never expressed self-pity, and I never heard her complain about her condition. Before she turned 50, my mother died. As a godly woman who never spoke an unkind word about anyone. My sister was still a teen and needed our mom. We all needed my mom. But she was gone. It seemed cruel and purposeless. She gave us love and a stable home and she suffered a terrible death. Is not the world like that? Good and bad, fun and painful, happy and broken-hearted. Perhaps you have felt that too. The split nature of our lives. The big Idea for today is of great importance. In a broken and chaotic world, suffering comes to all of us. Trust God to make good use of yours.

What makes the Psalms so valuable to us and so critical to your understanding of God and this world is that they are brutally honest about things. You have this in the Psalms. **I will sing of the Lord's great love forever; with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations. I will declare that your love stands firm forever, that you established your faithfulness in heaven itself.** (Psalm 89: 1-2 NIV) Joyous, celebrative and full of enthusiasm. Then in the same Psalm you have this. **How long, O Lord? Will you hide yourself forever? How long will your wrath burn like fire? Remember how fleeting is my life. For what futility you have created all men! What man can live and not see death, or save himself from the power of the grave?** (Psalm 89: 46-48 NIV) There is nothing cheerful there. Nothing but doubt and despair about how cruel life is. Just the chapter before you have the juxtaposition of steadying faith in God alongside burgeoning despondency at how life is. **O Lord, the God who saves me, day and night I cry out before you. May my prayer come before you; turn your ear to my cry. For my soul is full of trouble and my life draws near the grave.** (Psalm 88: 1-3 NIV) I had someone tell me recently that nothing good ever happens to him. There are Psalms that reflect that train of thought. But I, in contrast, could come up with a long list of ways he has been blessed and how great he has it. There are Psalms that indicate that also. There is a term that best describes how it is for us and how it will be in this life. Chaos. Our world is a world of chaos and we see this chaos pointed out in many places of Scripture.

Let me share a few examples. When David, as a young man defeated Goliath, he entered into a time of great triumph. His success in battle became renowned. Crowds literally cheered his name. But then the king of Israel, Saul began to lose his mind and ordered his men to kill David. **Saul told his son Jonathan and all the attendants to kill David.** (1 Samuel 19 :1a NIV) David had to flee for his life and live in hiding for ten years. Does that make sense? Is that dramatic change in circumstances reasonable? David was still a man after God's own heart, a faithful follower of the Lord. Why did he go from on top of the world to a peasant living in caves? It is chaos. The same could be said of Naboth who followed the laws of God and when the King of Israel, Ahab wanted to buy Naboth's vineyard, offering what he thought was a very fair price, Naboth said he couldn't sell it to him. It was a sacred duty to Naboth to maintain, according to the law of God, the property handed down to him by his ancestors and keep it in the family. **But Naboth replied, "The Lord forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers."** (1 Kings 21: 3 NIV) King Ahab became despondent as he very much wanted that land to plant a garden. Ahab's wife, the notorious Jezebel concocted a plan for murdering Naboth so Ahab could seize the land. It seems wildly unfair for Naboth to die, faithful Naboth, yet that is exactly what happened. One minute he was living the dream as godly landowner and the next he was dead. It can go the other way also. Ruth was a young widow whose dreams were shattered by her husband's death. The absurdity of who gets to live and who dies made the idea of a God who loves feel like a fantasy. But Ruth was bought into faith in a God who loves and before she knew it she not only was married but a mother. **So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. Then he went to her, and the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son.** (Ruth 4: 13 NIV) Ruth's life was just as chaotic as that of David and Naboth, just in reverse fashion.

The book of the Bible that most clearly underscores the chaos of this life is Job. Job famously was wealthy, had a beautiful family and was a respected member of his community. Without warning to him, all of his children died, his

business empire collapsed, and his health crumbled. Suddenly Job was a social pariah as it became accepted in his community that the reason for Job's terrible fall from prosperity and health was that some hidden corruption in his life led to God wrecking him. We learn from the Bible that Satan and God met and Satan accused God of treating Job with kid gloves. Satan insisted that the only reason Job had such great faith and lived so righteously was because all he ever experienced was blessing. **"Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face."** (Job 1: 9-11 NIV) God agreed to let Satan test Job's faith by bringing a storm of agony and heartache to see if he would maintain his trust in God. Keep in mind that Job was not privy to the supernatural meeting God and Satan had about him; Job would have viewed all he faced as chaos and it was.

Let me share four reasons why we experience chaos in our lives. First, much of our chaos is self-inflicted. We do things that make life worse for us. We don't exercise, we drink excessively, we keep arguing, we don't pay attention to instructions, drive too fast, we are self-centered, we ignore the Bible. Second, there are supernatural forces at work that we aren't given access to understand or observe. As was mentioned, Job's chaos was a direct result of Satan's intervention. Because we aren't told like Job was that Satan was directly involved in his chaos, we can never be certain that is the case, but it is something to consider. Third, God uses trouble or chaos to bring about your maturity and holiness. You may not have given enough thought to what the Bible says about the chaos Jesus Christ Himself experienced but it is critical you notice the ramifications for yourself. **During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him** (Hebrews 5: 7-9 NIV) The term translated perfect is perhaps better rendered mature or complete. It was what Jesus suffered that developed His character and built in Him obedience which is the primary component of holiness. You will not be holy if you have not experienced chaos, the sort of chaos that leaves you dumbfounded and stunned. As you give God your life at those points, the goodness of your soul grows, and you become more like Jesus than ever before.

There is a fourth reason for your chaos, and it is most difficult to comprehend without a full measure of the Holy Spirit making it clear to you. Pay careful attention to what Paul notes. **Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.** (Colossians 1: 24 NIV) There are troubles that can come to you that somehow make the church better and prevent Christ from suffering more than He did. The chaos you face brings strength and power to the church that cannot be gained any other way. And the beauty of this is that you are blessing Jesus by taking His place. Imagine your house is on fire and you and your spouse are standing outside and your child is still inside. Only one of you can go and retrieve your daughter. You tell your spouse to stay there, and you will suffer the smoke and flames to bring back your child. In a way that cannot be comprehended, you, by suffering, do that very same thing for Christ and for the church. Here is the big idea and it is critical that you absorb it. In a broken and chaotic world, suffering comes to all of us. Trust God to make good use of yours. You may like Job be confounded by the chaos in your life but this week, by faith turn your chaos over to God and trust Him that there is a good reason for it.