

Struggling or Suffering? Find help in these two Psalms...

by Pastor Tom Cox



All of us go through hard times. Whether it's cancer or some other health-related challenge, the loss of a job or income, or some sort of upset and unrest in our marriage or family life— we all encounter various sorts of troubles. Some three thousand years ago or so, the writer of Psalm 77, a man called Asaph, describes his own situation as being so stressful that he could neither **speak** nor **sleep**. Verse four says, “You hold my eyelids open; I am so troubled that I cannot speak.” He complains that he cries out to the Lord constantly in prayer but finds no comfort. Even worse, he feels overlooked by God, saying, “Will the Lord spurn forever, and never again be favorable? Has His steadfast love forever ceased? Are His promises at an end for all time? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His compassion?” (vss. 7-9). Perhaps you've felt like that. Maybe you're struggling with disrupted sleep and it seems like your prayers are bouncing off the ceiling and remaining unanswered.

Asaph's thoughts are not written down in some private prayer journal— rather they are recorded in the part of the Bible known as the *psalter*— it functioned as the hymnal for public worship by God's people. It was a record for all posterity and anyone could read about the agonies of his heart. Gladly, Asaph turned a corner when he determined to **seek** the Lord. He writes, “my spirit made a diligent search...” (vs. 6). He writes about appealing his case to God (in verse ten) and urges himself twice to *remember* the Lord's faithfulness to him in the past (in verses six and eleven). He goes on to remind himself that the God of all creation also delivered His people out of slavery in Egypt and through the perilous waters of the Red Sea.

Our second passage of Scripture to consider is Psalm 119, which is famous for being the longest chapter in the Bible (weighing in at some 176 verses), all of which focus on the importance of the Word of God. While that may be of some interest, for our purposes, I want to focus on a particular word that is used seven times in English in this lengthy psalm: that word is “afflict.”

Seven times the writer speaks of being *afflicted* or having some sort of *affliction*, which means to be in persistent pain or distress. It refers to our hardships and problems that one encounters in life. Today, we might call that our trials and tribulations or some sort of adversity.

While being afflicted in various ways doesn't sound very desirable, Asaph goes on to list multiple benefits of affliction, saying, “It was **good** for me that I was *afflicted* that I might learn Your statutes” (verse 71) and that “before I was *afflicted* I went astray, but now I keep Your Word (verse 67).

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In addition, affliction causes us to find comfort and life in God's promises (vs. 50) and to delight in God's Law (vs. 92). Moreover, it causes us to cry out to the Lord (vs. 107) like Asaph, saying, "I am severely *afflicted*; give me life, O Lord, according to Your Word!" And the bottom line on all this is that affliction is prompted by God's faithfulness to His Word and is actually for our betterment (vs. 75). Asaph closes off his repetition of this word by praying, "Look on my *affliction* and deliver me, for I do not forget Your Law" (vs. 153).

When we read the Old Testament, which looks forward to the coming of the Messiah, it is also important to interpret those Scriptures with verses from the New Testament that point us to Jesus, who is the Christ—meaning that God's Son is the Messiah and King who saves His people from their sins by His life of obedience, by His atoning sacrifice on the Cross, and by His bodily resurrection from the dead. Jesus alone can forgive our sins and give us eternal life.

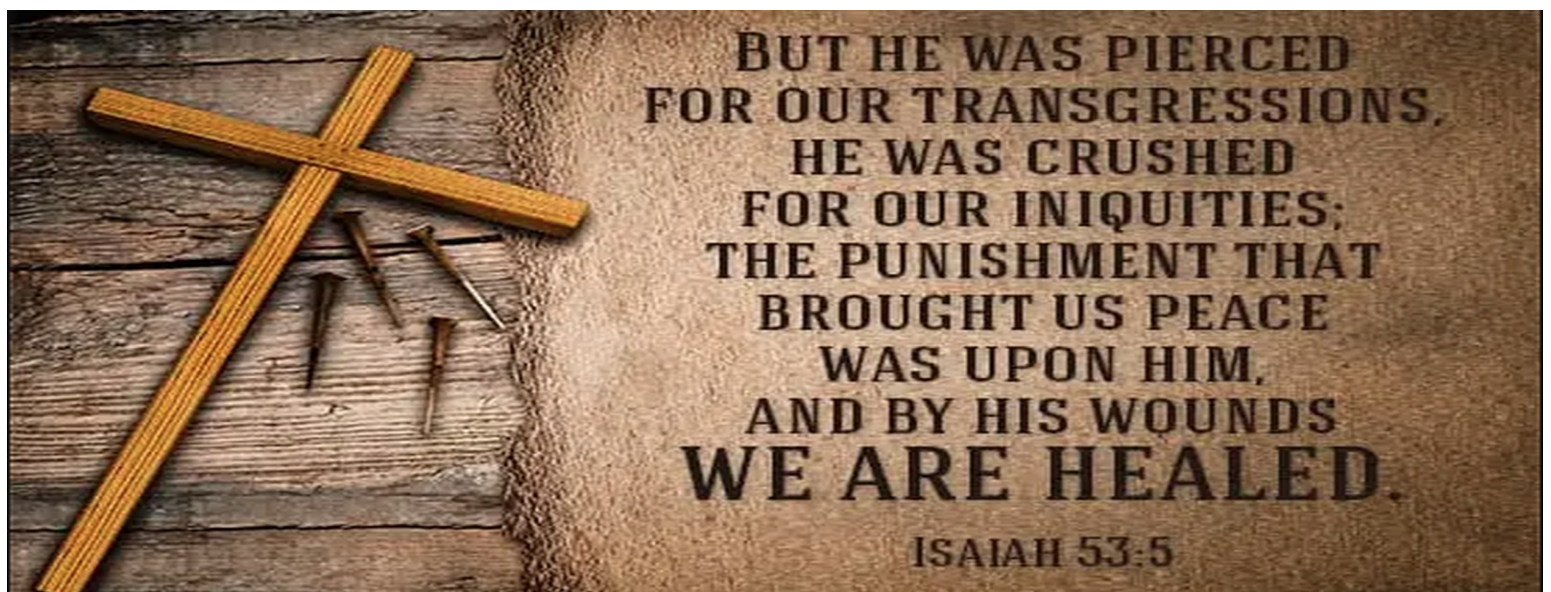
Passages like Romans 5:1-5 urge us to rejoice in our sufferings because we know that God is producing endurance, character, and hope in us. Similarly, the anonymous writer of the Book of Hebrews speaks of the fact that, like a father, God disciplines all those whom He loves so that we will share His holiness (see Hebrews 12:5-11).

It's insightful to note that the Apostle Paul uses some form of the word "affliction" ten times in the Book of 2 Corinthians alone! Here are just two such examples from chapter four:

"We are *afflicted* in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies." (verses eight through ten)

"So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary *affliction* is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison" (vss. 16-17).

So, when you find yourself under some sort of pressure— some sort of *affliction*— remember to find help in God's Word. Draw hope from Psalms 77 and 119, find help in the New Testament as well, and make sure to look to Jesus, who is the Author and Perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:2).



FBCPC KIDS CORNER, by Jenna Cox

Bible Discovery: Jesus Comes Back to Life

On March 23, kids discovered the greatest story ever—Jesus coming back to life! Although the story began with sadness when Jesus died on the cross, it quickly turned to joy when His tomb was found empty and angels announced, "Jesus is alive!" Jesus appeared to His friends, showing He had truly risen. In response, kids wrote heartfelt thank-you notes inside heart shapes to celebrate Jesus' love, forgiveness, and amazing rescue.

You're Invited to Our Annual Easter Egg Hunt!

Join us for our annual Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday, April 19th from 2 PM - 4 PM! Bring your family, friends, and neighbors for an afternoon filled with fun, snacks, and fellowship. Kids will enjoy hunting for eggs, and everyone is invited to gather for a short devotional as we celebrate the true meaning of Easter—the good news of Jesus. Don't miss this joyful event as we share God's love with our community this Easter season!



FBCPC COMMITTEE CORNER

Worship Committee:

Communion was observed on March 2nd during the morning worship service. Next communion date is April 17th (Maundy Thursday).

Easter Sunday Events: Sunrise service is at 7:00 a.m. with breakfast following in the fellowship hall. Regular Easter Sunday worship is at 11:00 a.m.

We always have room for new and old voices in the Adult Choir. Practice is at 6:00 p.m. on Thursdays.

Presbyterian Women News

The Annual Yard and Bake Sale will be held Saturday, May 3rd. Start collecting and pricing items now for the sale.

Happy Birthday

Bill Doyle—4/2
Patrick Newtown—4/2
Muriel Sharpe—4/2
(91 years old!)
Ronin Buckler—4/4
Hannah Rhodes—4/8
Parker Bain—4/10
Carol Daskal—4/13
Glenn Coleman—4/15
John Lucas Underhill—4/16
Vivian Holmes—4/19
Nancy Smith—4/19
(91 years old!)
Allie Adcock—4/21
Jay Magyar—4/24
Charlotte McArtan—4/26
Mallory Parker—4/30



Happy Anniversary

Matthew & Lauren Bain—4/12
Patrick & Brandy Newtown—4/14
Tom & Kelli Cox—4/18
Donnie & Melanie Underhill—4/18
Erik & Hannah Rhodes—4/21
Stuart & Cindy Bond—4/23
Dewayne & Kim Lee—4/25
Reggie & Stella Akers—4/27
(62 years!)

Memorials

Phil Bain
Betty Bain

Roger L. Bain
Betty Bain

Neil Eldridge Brown
Reggie & Stella Akers

Crystal W. Butler
Reggie & Stella Akers

William Thomas Butler, Sr.
Reggie & Stella Akers

Pamela T. Byrd
Jack & Debbie Hanks
Jo Stone-Ash

Bobby Hamilton
Peggy Hamilton
Betty Wilder

Honorarium

Mary Lasater
Garry & Tracy McArtan

HOLY WEEK EVENTS

4/13—Palm Sunday

4/17—Maundy Thursday Communion Service TTBD

(This will be a joint service with Calvary Baptist Church and
Union Methodist Global Church)

4/19—Youth Easter Egg Hunt 2PM—4PM

4/20—EASTER SUNDAY

7:00 Sunrise Service & Breakfast

No Sunday School

11:00 AM Easter Worship Service



He is Risen

DEATH COULD NOT HOLD HIM.

Rejoice in the resurrection of

Jesus Christ.



WISHING YOU A BLESSED AND JOY FILLED EASTER!

Prayer Requests

Our Pastor, Church Leaders and Church Family

Our Country (and Leaders) for many reasons

Our Military Personnel & Emergency Services

Western NC

Nancy Smith— brain bleed

Brynlee Crawford— daughter of Brittany Bass and Jonathan Crawford in NICU at Duke

Charlie Aslund— Cancer

Donnie Hamilton—health issues

Betty Bain—cancer

Evelyn Bordeaux—illness

Paul & Georgette Dempster— illness

Unspoken concerns

Shut-ins who are alone and lonely

Those who are struggling financially, physically, and mentally.

Those doing Mission work spreading the Gospel of Jesus throughout to World.

The needs are many and these are the ones that we're currently aware of. Please feel free to contact us by the church phone, email, website, or Facebook should you have a specific request.

(Additional updated Prayer Requests are distributed every Sunday at Worship Service)



March Memories
Made.....

