

## Week 3 - “Psalm 31 – The God of the Suffering Soul”

### The Aim of the Session

The problem of Suffering is possibly one of the most difficult subjects for the Christian to grapple with in that it provides plenty of extreme examples, but precious little in terms of rational solutions. So how do we grapple with it?

- **Welcome**

What is the most painful injury you have ever sustained?

- **Worship**

Read Luke 22:39-46. Spend a few moments in quiet and imagine the scene. Try and find words or short phrase that describe the Passion of what is happening and what Jesus is going through, and is ready to go through because of his love for you. How does Jesus deal with this time? It might help to sing or play “How Deep The Father’s Love For Us” or read the words as a poem. Thank God for his love for us and pray that you would know this love deeper and deeper as you look at the suffering in the world.

- **Word**

It is probable that Psalm 31 is two Psalms put together (1-8, 9-24). The first section details with “Danger” and the second section with “Illness” and “Enemies”

Read Psalm 31:1-8

- ❖ Why is God the first person David looks to (v1)?
- ❖ Why don’t we do that in times of trouble?
- ❖ What are the six things he asks of God in verses 1 and 2?
- ❖ Unpack each of them – what is he really asking?
- ❖ Note David’s faith and what he assumes in verse 3. What effect does having a deepening faith in God make in our lives?
- ❖ If he knows a trap is there (v4), why does he ask for God’s help?
- ❖ Jesus quotes v5 from the Cross (Luke 23:46). What does this say about the depth of David’s sense of trouble at this moment? And his depth of trust (v6)?
- ❖ What is his expectation of God (vv7/8)?

Read Psalm 31:9-12 - David’s physical suffering is echoed by his feelings of rejection

- ❖ In what ways are physical, mental and spiritual suffering interconnected?
- ❖ What does this say about our need to have strong relationships around us?
- ❖ What does this say about how we view our own suffering?

Read Psalm 31:13-24 – We are not subject to physical persecution in this nation but David saw his Kingship (and the threats to it) in terms of his relationship and calling from God.

- ❖ Who do you perceive as your spiritual enemies?
- ❖ What does David say are the marks of their hatred (vv13,15,18)?
- ❖ And what respite does he find (vv14,16,19)?
- ❖ What does he recall of God in the past (vv21-22)?
- ❖ Why? (Maybe think back to last week)
- ❖ What confidence does it give (vv23-24)?

Our natural reaction to being on the end of suffering is to seek understanding in order that we can establish the cause and, as a result, a solution.

- Why is this not always possible? (Read Isaiah 55:8-9)
- What reasons do you have for the apparent indiscriminate suffering in the world?
- What can the Christian faith offer to address this problem?
- How does Psalm 31 help in this (vv14,24)?
- How does Jesus (Luke 22:39-46) help our understanding?
- How would you answer someone who says that Suffering in the World is a proof of the non-existence of God?

- **Works**

There may be some in the group who know suffering, first-hand, at this moment. Pray for them (and if appropriate, lay hands on them) and ask God to deepen their faith and trust in God's ability to deal with the issue as well as his Sovereignty over it.

Please take some time to pray for the suffering you see in the world around you, on the news, in the town, or down your street. Pray that God will inspire Christians in each of these places to act, in order to alleviate suffering, or to stand by those who suffer. Warning – that could mean you!

Note in a prayer diary situations and individuals you have prayed for.

“The Grace” is a Prayer we pray over one another, asking for God's Grace, his freely given, abundant love and goodness, to surround us as we go from meeting together. Pray it (slowly), being aware that you are praying for his Grace to be applied into each of the situations and lives you have talked about.



**Next Time ...**

## **Psalms: Seeking God Through Honesty and Reality**

4 - Psalm 42 “Thirsting for God”