

# Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs: The Master Musician's Melodies

Bereans Sunday School  
Placerita Baptist Church  
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by  
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## Psalm 38 — Sick with Sin

### 1.0 Introducing Psalm 38

- Psalm 38 is one of the penitential psalms (6; 32; 51; 102; 130; 143).
- Psalms 6 and 38 have a number of similarities.
- It is a prayerful lament regarding the condition David finds himself in because of a sin he had committed.
- Scripture nowhere explicitly refers to this time of illness that David experienced.
- Compare the exhortation to “Wait for the LORD” in 37:34 with the expression of hope in 38:15, “For I hope in You, O LORD.”
- Psalms 38 and 70 both include “for a memorial” in their headings. This could be a reference to the memorial offering (cf. Leviticus 5:12-13).

### 2.0 Reading Psalm 38 (NAU)

A Psalm of David, for a memorial.

- 38:1** O LORD, rebuke me not in Your wrath,  
And chasten me not in Your burning anger.
- 38:2** For Your arrows have sunk deep into me,  
And Your hand has pressed down on me.
- 38:3** There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your indignation;  
There is no health in my bones because of my sin.
- 38:4** For my iniquities are gone over my head;  
As a heavy burden they weigh too much for me.

- 38:5** My wounds grow foul *and* fester  
Because of my folly.
- 38:6** I am bent over and greatly bowed down;  
I go mourning all day long.
- 38:7** For my loins are filled with burning,  
And there is no soundness in my flesh.
- 38:8** I am benumbed and badly crushed;  
I groan because of the agitation of my heart.
- 38:9** **Lord**, all my desire is before You;  
And my sighing is not hidden from You.
- 38:10** My heart throbs, my strength fails me;  
And the light of my eyes, even that has gone from me.
- 38:11** My loved ones and my friends stand aloof from my plague;  
And my kinsmen stand afar off.
- 38:12** Those who seek my life lay snares *for me*;  
And those who seek to injure me have threatened destruction,  
And they devise treachery all day long.
- 38:13** But I, like a deaf man, do not hear;  
And *I am* like a mute man who does not open his mouth.
- 38:14** Yes, I am like a man who does not hear,  
And in whose mouth are no arguments.
- 38:15** For I hope in You, **O LORD**;  
You will answer, **O Lord my God**.
- 38:16** For I said, "May they not rejoice over me,  
*Who*, when my foot slips, would magnify themselves against me."
- 38:17** For I am ready to fall,  
And my sorrow is continually before me.
- 38:18** For I confess my iniquity;  
I am full of anxiety because of my sin.
- 38:19** But my enemies are vigorous *and* strong,  
And many are those who hate me wrongfully.
- 38:20** And those who repay evil for good,  
They oppose me, because I follow what is good.
- 38:21** Do not forsake me, **O LORD**;  
**O my God**, do not be far from me!
- 38:22** Make haste to help me,  
**O Lord**, my salvation!

For the choir director, for Jeduthun.

### 3.0 Understanding Psalm 38

#### 3.1 Outline

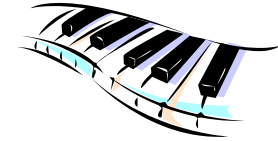
- I. Prayer for Mercy (vv. 1-8)
- II. Prayer for Relief (vv. 9-12)
- III. Prayer of Confession (vv. 13-20)
- IV. Prayer for Help (vv. 21-22)



#### 3.2 Notes

- v. 1 See Psalm 6:1.
- v. 3 “because of my sin”
  - Sin is not the cause of every illness. In this case, however, David’s illness is the result of his iniquity (cf. v. 4).
  - “Suffering is a form of God’s discipline in the school of righteousness.” —Willem A. VanGemeren, “Psalms,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 12 vols., ed. by Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 5:307.
  - Questions to ask when suffering from illness or experiencing trials (James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms*, 3 vols. [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1994], 1:333):
    - ✓ **“Have I sinned or gotten off the track of obedience to what I know I should be doing, and is this setback God’s way of getting me back on track and into fellowship with him?”**
    - ✓ **“Is God using this to trim off some rough edges of my personality and develop a more Christ-like character in me?”**
    - ✓ **“Is God using my suffering as a stage upon which his name and wisdom may be glorified? Is it a place for me to show that I love him for who he is, entirely apart from whatever material and physical benefits he may have given me?”**
- v. 5 “my folly”
  - Looking at sin as folly focuses on the fact that David knew better than to sin.
  - His sin was the opposite of godly wisdom.
- vv. 13-14 “deaf . . . mute”
  - David feels totally isolated from everyone around him and from the comforts he once enjoyed.
  - Those who suffer from depression sometimes feel this isolation because they desire to be alone in their depression — they become too self-centered.

- **v. 15** “You will answer”
  - David was deep in depression, but he still realized that his way out of depression depended upon his God.
  
- **v. 20** “I follow what is good”
  - “David’s sins, however serious, were those of a man whose fundamental choice was to *follow after good*, ...”—Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1–72*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 155.
  
- **vv. 21-22** “LORD ... my God ... Lord”
  - “LORD” focuses on God’s covenant relationship to His people.
  - “My God” expresses the intimate relationship David enjoyed with God.
  - “Lord” emphasizes the sovereign authority of the Master of the universe and of the psalmist.



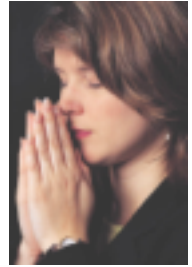
#### 4.0 Singing Psalm 38 (Tune: “Am I A Soldier of the Cross?”)

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| <p><b>1</b> Amidst thy wrath remember love,<br/>Restore thy servant, Lord;<br/>Nor let a Father's chast'ning prove<br/>Like an avenger's sword.</p> <p><b>3</b> My sins a heavy load appear,<br/>And o'er my head are gone;<br/>Too heavy they for me to bear,<br/>Too hard for me t' atone.</p> <p><b>5</b> Lord, I am weak and broken sore,<br/>None of my powers are whole:<br/>The inward anguish makes me roar,<br/>The anguish of my soul.</p> <p><b>7</b> Thou art my God, my only hope;<br/>My God will hear my cry;<br/>My God will bear my spirit up,<br/>When Satan bids me die.</p> <p><b>9</b> But I'll confess my guilt to thee,<br/>And grieve for all my sin;<br/>I'll mourn how weak my graces be,<br/>And beg support divine.</p> | <p><b>2</b> Thine arrows stick within my heart,<br/>My flesh is sorely pressed;<br/>Between the sorrow and the smart,<br/>My spirit finds no rest.</p> <p><b>4</b> My thoughts are like a troubled sea,<br/>My head still bending down;<br/>And I go mourning all the day,<br/>Beneath my Father's frown.</p> <p><b>6</b> All my desire to thee is known,<br/>Thine eye counts every tear;<br/>And every sigh, and every groan,<br/>Is noticed by thine ear.</p> <p><b>8</b> [My foot is ever apt to slide,<br/>My foes rejoice to see 't;<br/>They raise their pleasure and their pride<br/>When they supplant my feet.</p> <p><b>10</b> My God, forgive my follies past,<br/>And be for ever nigh;<br/>O Lord of my salvation, haste,<br/>Before thy servant die.]</p> |
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— Isaac Watts

## **5.0 Praying Psalm 38**

- I have been foolish and have sinned, Lord. [v. 5]
- Behold my illness and give me relief, O God. [v. 9]
- Father, my hope is in You. [v. 15]
- Father, forgive me, because I have sinned against You. [v. 18]
- Lord, You alone are my salvation. [v. 22]
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## **6.0 Applying Psalm 38**

- Sickness can be the result of sin.
- Sin must be confessed and we must demonstrate a disposition to do good.
- Depression's antidote or cure rests with God — we must turn to Him in prayer.