THE PROBLEM AND POWER OF PAIN
WEEK 4 • DAILY BRIEFING 5 • NEW EVERY MORNING

WEEKLY MEMORY VERSE

Psalm 32:10

Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD.

This week follows Sunday's sermon, "Self-Inflicted Suffering." You can watch or listen to the sermon at 1mso.church or on the One Missoula app.

OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank You that Your mercies are new every morning. Forgive me for blaming You for pain my own choices brought into my life. I want to stop complaining and come home to You. Thank You for Your steadfast patience with me and mercy toward me. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

TODAY'S TEACHING

All week we have been memorizing Psalm 32:10, and so far we have spent most of our time in the first half of it: "Many are the sorrows of the wicked." On Sunday we talked about self-inflicted suffering, and since then we have looked at choosing the wrong hard, blame-shifting, waiting on God to make decisions He already handed us authority to make, and fake apologies that only protect your image. Today we are going to end on hope, which is the second half of the verse: "but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD." If your own choices caused your pain, God is not your enemy. He is your way back.

Here is where a lot of people get stuck. Their choices wreck their marriage or their bank account, and then they get angry at God for letting it happen. Some of them walk away from church and tell everyone that God let them down. But God warned them. Through the prophet Jeremiah, God asked His people, "Have you not brought this upon yourself by forsaking the LORD your God, when he led you in the way?" (Jeremiah 2:17). God's commands were never meant to ruin your life. Moses told Israel that God gave His commandments "for your good" (Deuteronomy 10:13). Blaming God for the pain His Word warned you about is backward, and if you hold onto it long enough, it will pull you away from the only One who can help you.

Now something needs to be restated clearly. Not all pain is self-inflicted. The widow who lost her husband did not cause her grief, and a child who was hurt by a parent did not bring that on himself. If that is your story, today is not about blame. But the hope in today's passages is for you too.

The first passage comes from Lamentations, a book of poems written after the Babylonian army destroyed Jerusalem in 586 BC. For years, Jeremiah had warned the people that this would happen if they kept turning away from God, and they ignored him. Tradition holds that Jeremiah also wrote Lamentations, but the book does not name its author explicitly. The writer is sitting in the rubble of a disaster his own people brought on themselves. He spends the first part of chapter 3 describing how bad it is, and then the tone changes.

The second passage is a story Jesus told. Religious leaders were offended that Jesus welcomed people they considered sinners and even ate with them (Luke 15:1–2), so He told them about a man with two sons. The younger son asked for his share of the family inheritance early, which was a deep insult to his father while he was still alive (15:12). Then he moved to a far country and "squandered his property in reckless living" (15:13). When the money ran out, a famine hit, and he ended up feeding pigs and wishing he could eat what they ate (15:14–16). For the Jewish audience listening to Jesus, it was hard to imagine a lower place to land.

READ & MEDITATE

Lamentations 3:21–23, 39–40

But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: [22]The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; [23]they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. … [39]Why should a living man complain, a man, about the punishment of his sins? [40]Let us test and examine our ways, and return to the LORD!

Luke 15:17–20

But when he came to himself, he said, "How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! [18]I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. [19]I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.'" [20]And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.

As you read, notice what each person does with the mess he is in.

REFLECT

Answer these honestly. This is between you and God, and nobody else needs to see what you write.

The writer of Lamentations was surrounded by ruins when he wrote these words.

1. What did he decide to "call to mind" in Lamentations 3:21–23, and what did it give him?

He did not deny the pain, and he did not pretend it was someone else's fault. He chose to remember who God is. A few verses later he writes that God "does not afflict from his heart or grieve the children of men" (Lamentations 3:33). The discipline was real, but God was not his enemy.

In verse 39 the writer asks a question, and in verse 40 he answers it.

2. Fill in the blank from Lamentations 3:40: "Let us test and examine our ways, and _____ to the LORD!"

Why is it inconsistent to complain against God and return to Him at the same time?

In the second passage, the son in Jesus' story hit bottom a long way from home.

3. Fill in the blank from Luke 15:17: "But when he came to _____, he said…"

Who did the son blame for where he ended up?

He did not blame his father, and he did not blame the famine. He said, “I have sinned against heaven and before you.” That is ownership, and it is the first step home.

The son had a speech ready, but his father did not wait for it.

4. What did the father do in verse 20 before his son said a word?

What does the father’s response tell you about God?

That is the steadfast love from your memory verse. The Hebrew word behind “steadfast love” in Psalm 32:10 is *ḥesed*, the same word used in Lamentations 3:22. It describes God’s loyal love for His people, and it does not quit on them. John put it as a promise: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Some people have been angry at God for years over pain their own choices caused.

5. Is there pain in your life that you have been holding against God, even though your own choices played a part in it?

What would it look like to stop complaining and return to Him?

MY “I WILL” STATEMENT

This week we spent four days in the first half of Psalm 32:10. The second half is a promise, and it is for anyone willing to come home.

Write one sentence that begins with the words “I will.” Make it something you can actually do in the next seven days, name the day you will do it, and tie it to what you wrote in question 5.

Example: I will take thirty minutes on Saturday morning to confess to God the part my spending played in our debt, and I will be back in church on Sunday instead of hiding from Him.

PRAYER

Bring what you just wrote to God. Write your prayer or pray out loud.

MEMORY VERSE

Write or recite Psalm 32:10 from memory.