

How Are You?

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[0 : 0 0] Okay, the one verse that I want us to look at and hopefully memorize is Psalm 119, verse 28.

My soul is weary with sorrow. Strengthen me according to your word. One of the most annoying, irritating questions in the whole world is the question, how are you?

Now, sometimes it's irritating because of the person asking it. So they ask you, how are you? But by how they then kind of conduct themselves after that, they reveal they don't give a toss about what your answer is.

They don't even listen to what you're saying. So you could reply to the question, how are you, by saying, my cat just got eaten by a badger and my dad's in intensive care and my leg's just falling off and they can go, oh, that's nice.

You know people like that? They don't even listen to what you're saying. Irritating. But sometimes the people who are irritating are the people who answer the question.

[1 : 1 4] And normally because we verge on kind of two extremes of dishonesty. So the question is asked, how are you? And some people have had a lot going on in their life so their cat might have just been eaten by a badger and dad is in intensive care and their leg has just fallen off.

But they reply by going, yeah, I'm good. Fine. Liar. Christians are the worst, aren't we? I'm fine. Sometimes, though, there's other people who treat that question as like a competition to try and win the kind of whose day's been the crappiest competition.

And we're out for like maybe to manipulate emotions, maybe to get something from the other person. And so the response is, oh, my cat just got eaten by a badger and my dad's in intensive care and my leg's just falling off.

When in reality, they've never had a cat. Their dad's maybe got a wee tickly cough and they've ripped their tights, but that's the extent of need. But they're exaggerating for the sake of a little bit of empathy.

We're terrible at answering and asking the question, how are you? But the reality is, every time you come to God's Word of the Bible, God is asking you that question.

[2 : 3 3] How are you? And if the God of the Bible is real, then dishonesty at that point is completely pointless. He knows everything.

He sees everything. All of my emotions, my motives, my thoughts, my past, my scars, my nightmares, my fears, my relapses, my darkness, my depression, my mania, my lies, my prayers, my past, my future, everything.

It's like an open book to him. And so, listen, that means church is not just an hour a week where you turn up slightly smarter than you've been for the rest of the week.

And maybe with your kids encouraged to be slightly better behaved than they have been the rest of the week, to present some kind of disguise or mask. It's about coming as you are to the God who already knows how you are.

And the hope that the Bible holds out for us depends on the extent that we are honest with him.

[3 : 45] And what we're going to see today is that when we are honest about how we actually are, God gives us exactly what we need. That's the first half of this verse.

Look at it again. Psalm 119, verse 28. It is this guy responding to the question, how are you? And he answers, my soul is weary with sorrow.

Now, let me ask three questions just to kind of dig into this a little bit. We're going to ask what, where, and why. So question one, what's he feeling? Answer, weary.

Ever been there? The word that's used weary there is also used in the Bible to describe a leak in a house. So the word is giving you a picture, conjuring up something in your mind that weariness feels that life is leaking out of you.

It's a classic cartoon sketch. You know when there's a leak in a pipe and you go, and then suddenly it's just everywhere else. You know that feeling of, it's just emptying out of me, and I'm left with nothing.

[5 : 04] I'm empty. The same word is also used in the Bible to describe the eyes, pouring out tears. Here's a man who knows that crying is tiring.

He's done. You can also translate the word as melting. He feels like his life is just dissolving.

It's like a snowman in a sauna. It's just disappearing from him. Weary. Some of us know what that is like intimately.

That's what. Question two, where? Where is he feeling this? He says, my soul is weary. Now we all know what it is to feel physically tired, but that's not what he's talking about here.

We don't just have a body that grows and then gradually decays. We have a soul that lives and lives on forever. The soul is the life that God has breathed into us.

[6 : 14] It is not so much that we have a soul, but we are a soul. It's what we are. It's the precious inner constant, despite all of our life's outward changes.

It's my longings and my feelings and my hurts. It's everything on that scale from delight to depression. It's that part of me that gets overwhelmed and overthinks.

It's the soul. And it seems to be involved in everything we do in this world, but it also seems to be unable to be satisfied by anything in this world.

My soul is weary. Never felt that? Now identifying the wear of his weariness is important because the wear of the symptoms will impact the what of the treatment.

So if part of our weariness is physical, you might need rest. You might need physio. That's true. It might be that part of your weariness comes from some kind of chemical imbalance in your brain.

[7 : 23] So you might need medication. But if part of your weariness is in your God-given soul, then we need a remedy that is more than a physio's manipulation or more than a doctor's medication.

The question is, who can cure a soul? That's what we're going to get to when we get to the second half of the verse. What weary were the soul?

Question three, why? My soul is weary with sorrow. Now we don't exactly know what has been going on in this guy's life.

We don't know if he's in danger. We don't know if folk are after him. We don't know if someone close to him or something that belonged to him has gone. It's possible that he's sorrowful because he's been sinful.

If you look at verse 25, he talks about feeling stuck in the dust. So maybe he's referring to that kind of sin curse of, to dust you will return.

[8 : 29] In verse 29, he asks to be kept from deceitful ways. So maybe he's been bang at it. But we don't know. Actually, the fact that it's undefined means that I can make this verse mine.

My soul is weary with my sorrow. Been there?

You feel that? Now we are going to get to the second half of the verse and go, well, where does he find relief? Where does he find escape? Where does he find answer? But before we get to that too quickly, we need to acknowledge that wherever he is going to go, we've got places that we normally go.

Now, in our sorrow, it's often somewhere that we can get stuck. We kind of get wedged into our weariness. Maybe some of us in the room this morning are going, I've only ever lived in the first half of this verse.

That's been my whole life. My soul, weary with sorrow. And we've probably got some ingrained habits and kind of coping mechanisms of where our weary soul has traveled to try and find answers.

[9 : 47] So maybe there's well-traveled paths from our weary souls to retail therapy where we try and spoil ourselves when we feel like we are spoiled.

Maybe to the makeup counter when our head is telling us that we're ugly. Maybe to the dealer to escape what won't stop haunting us. Maybe to the off-license to try and numb all of the noise.

Maybe to pornography to try and escape the boredom. Maybe to the gaming world when reality is just too overwhelming. Maybe to self-harm when life feels out of control.

Or maybe just to phone Just Eat because it offers comfort amid a world that is dissatisfying. But there's well-trodden paths to all of these things and the truth is they have never got us out of the first half of this verse.

They're well-trodden paths because we have walked them often but we are still stuck. My soul is weary with sorrow.

[10 : 57] And we need to see these things and say a bit like the language in 119 verse 32 they have promised to make us run but in reality they have left us stuck.

They promised enjoyment they have left us enslaved. My soul is still weary with sorrow. So how do we get out of the first half of the verse?

Well he says Psalm 119 verse 28 My soul is weary with sorrow strengthen me according to your word.

Let me ask three more questions just to try and see what this actually means for us. So first question how? How do you get out of the first half?

Answer it begins with prayer. Prayer is the 999 call that connects him to the life support that God gives.

[12 : 00] He in the first half of the verse just is kind of describing his feelings but this second half of the verse is the desperation of his faith. When he's stuck he acknowledges that he has to look beyond himself for help.

Now we're not good at this but we need to own this. When we need an answer the reason why I am often not the answer to my own problems is because I am the problem.

Or sometimes the reason that I am not the answer to my problems is because my problem is way bigger than me. And if the sorrow is deep in our soul it is not enough to phone a doctor it is not enough to book a counsellor it is not enough to go to a dealer it is not enough to phone Just Eat you need to cry out to God.

If your soul is created by God then your soul can only ever be cared for by God. The one who formed it must be the one who fills it.

and what we are being modelled here from a sorrow wearied soul is that the way out of this first half of the verse the only way out of the first half of this verse is to cry out to the God of the universe.

[13 : 34] You look beyond yourself. Prayer the 999 call of the weary soul to the living God. Okay, question two.

What? What do you pray for when your soul is like this? Answer, he prays to God for strength.

Now that is amazing because what does that tell you? You do not need to be strong to come to God. I think we often think that. I need to get my life together.

I need to give the appearance that everything's okay. I need to stop crying. I need to have some kind of record of good. This verse says wrong.

The shape of a relationship with God as it's pictured over and over again in the Bible is this. We bring our weaviness to him and he gives his strength.

[14 : 37] to us. See if you're not a Christian that's the shape of a relationship with God. It's how it starts and how it continues and how it ends.

It starts by saying God I am weary in my sin and it's the only thing that I've got to offer to you. And we bring our sin to him and he gives a strong saviour to us.

And if you're at that point where you're just overwhelmed with sorrow the one thing we want you to get out of this service today is God says you do not need to come to a place or position of strength to meet with me.

You just bring your weary soul and you'll hear the Lord Jesus say come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest.

It's an amazing thing. You don't need to be strong. But it's also a surprising thing. Right? See if I was writing this, this is how I'd finish it. This would be the second half of my verse. God, my soul is weary with sorrow.

[15 : 44] Take my sorrow away. Would that not be what you'd pray? I want easy life and I want quick fix. God, remove the sorrow.

Is that what he asked for? No, he doesn't ask for his soul's burden to get lighter. answer. He asks for his soul to get stronger.

He's not asking to escape the sorrow, but he's asking for strength to endure the sorrow. See, we know the only way to escape this sorrow-filled world is to leave this world.

And that is our hope as Christians, isn't it? That the resurrection of Jesus is the steadfast promise that for someone who trusts in him, the end of this life is the end of sorrow.

And it is the beginning of forever rest. that is better by far. We can say, to die is gain.

[17 : 09] But until he saves us from that, we need strength for it. And that's what he promises. You just bring your soul williness to me, and I will give my strength.

to you. So, final question. How? How will God strengthen us? My soul is weary with sorrow.

Strengthen me, what does he say, according to your word. If prayer is the 999 call that cries out to God, God's word is the life support that God provides for weary souls.

according to God's word, everything has its origin in God's word. If you remember the first pages of the Bible say, in the beginning, God said, let there be light, and there was light.

Absolutely everything in this world owes its origin to the word of God. God's God's love.

[18 : 49] And all of a sudden, you just feel like it's weary and you're weary. What do you need? Plug yourself in. That's what we need. The Bible is life support for sorrow-filled souls.

others. But it's not only that creation comes through God's word, and it's not just that God speaks to us in a book, which he does, but it's that he sent his son Jesus into this world as the word.

That's what he's called. And I know when you are weary with sorrow, the Bible can feel like a clamp that is shut.

And when your eyes are full of tears and when your whole existence feels like it's melting and life has leaked out of you, the hardest thing in the world sometimes is to open the Bible, isn't it?

The good news on days like that is it's not just a book that you can come to, but the word of God is a person who has come to you.

[19 : 59] And if I do anything today, I want to make sure that you know and see and hear today that the word of God strengthens sorrowful souls and that comes through having a clear sight of your Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, the word of God, strength for weary souls comes through a sight of Jesus the word.

And I want you to see this word that weeps with you in your sorrow. Remember that moment when Jesus is at the gravesite of one of his good friends called Lazarus and we get a simple statement, Jesus wept.

his eyes are leaking tears. His life is like it's melting away from him.

And the beautiful thing about the closeness of Jesus, the word of God, is in that moment he is not just full of sorrow at death, but he is also there in sympathy with you.

you need to see the strength comes by seeing this word weeping. But we need also to see, and I'm desperate for you to see, the word that then goes from weeping to willingly suffering for you.

[21 : 33] the night before Jesus was killed on a cross, he enters a garden called Gethsemane, and like the psalmist cries out in desperate faith, the Lord Jesus says, my soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.

Sound familiar? It's almost like he's speaking, Psalm 119 verse 28, my soul is weary with sorrow. The eternal word of God that spoke creation into being enters the first half of this verse.

He willingly takes on your sorrow, he willingly bears your burden, he is willingly taking upon himself the suffering and the sorrow and the sin that is mine.

And he takes that burden the next day to a hill called Calvary where we are told he bows his head and breathes his last. The eternal word gives his life for you so that he can give life to you.

his strength is gone so that he can breathe strength into your weary soul. And then on the third day in what is the most loud communication of strength God to weary people.

[23 : 24] He rises and do you know the word that he speaks almost more often than any other word is? He comes to his disciples and he says peace.

And in that moment that is not a weak word. That is a word that is strong and it is a fighting word that says even in the moments where your soul is overwhelmed with sorrow even to the point of death according to the word of God there is peace even now.

God. And so I want to give you this verse as the invitation of God where he comes to you today and says you don't need to be strong.

You don't need to pretend. You can come exactly as you are and my promise to you is that when you bring your weary soul to me my word will give you strength.

And that's what we've been praying for you even just in this last week from Grace Mount. Shall I pray? Our Father in heaven when our souls are weary overwhelmed with sorrow please lift our eyes to see your Son the Word of God and in seeing him in hearing him may you please breathe resurrection strength into our sorrow filled souls.

[25 : 15] And we pray these things in the only way we can. In Jesus' name. Amen.