

You Don't Suffer Alone

by Heber Ticas

Recently I visited the dentist due to a toothache. It turns out he had to extract one of my wisdom teeth. Man, I hate the dentist! Not the person, but I hate the experience—the scraping, the drilling sounds, the water being sucked out of (or sprayed into) my mouth, the residual pain. Even having to hold my mouth wide open for half an hour gives me a jaw ache.

I know I'll be okay when it's over and my mouth heals, but man, during the time when I'm in that chair, leaning

back and looking at a bright light, I'm suffering. I'm praying: "God, please help me get through this". It might seem silly, but I think you know what I'm talking about. Maybe you've felt like this in other situations, and maybe you prayed like I did.

It's natural for us to pray when we're in trouble. You've probably heard the saying: "There are no atheists in foxholes". Suffering turns our hearts toward God. We can read a number of examples in the Bible, but King David seems to write the best about how it feels to suffer. Check out this earnest request he made: "Listen closely to my prayer, O Lord,

hear my urgent cry. I will call to you whenever I'm in trouble, and you will answer me".¹

We can see that David believes God hears us when we pray, especially when we're suffering or in trouble. David promises to call out to God in prayer, and then he confidently says that God will answer him. We can do the same. But does this mean that our suffering will be removed? That some miracle will happen?

Though that's what we would like, we realise that prayer is not a gold coin inserted into a vending machine called God. It's possible that our suffering will go away, but the answer God often provides is an inner knowing or assurance that we are not alone in our suffering.

God's presence strengthens us and gives us courage and hope in the midst of difficulties. Sometimes other people come alongside us in our suffering and help us, and God ministers to us through their words and their actions.

Suffering is a part of being human. Even Jesus suffered. His example of patient endurance when mistreated, wrongly accused, beaten, and nailed to a cross can help us put our suffering in perspective. God never left Jesus while he suffered, and God will never leave us.

If you are suffering today, even if it's just a visit to the dentist, know that you do not suffer alone. God hears your prayers, your requests for comfort, and he always answers with his presence.

May you feel God's comforting assurance in your suffering today.

NOTES

¹ Psalm 86: 6–7 (New Living Translation).

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