



This is how this section of the psalm begins as well. The psalmist acknowledges this by saying, “your hands made me and formed me.” When we take a closer look at those words, it rings of intimacy and familiarity. It’s amazing how sensitive human hands are. I don’t know the science or the biology behind it, but it’s so sensitive that we can feel the difference between the softness of a baby’s cheek, a teenager’s cheek and an adult’s. Even a carpenter, while working with wood, can run his hands across a plank and is able to feel every dip and bump, the spot where the surface is a bit rough and needs some sanding. Though God does not have a physical body, language like this is used in the Bible to describe the care, precision, and detail that God took to create each human being. He was involved in the design and the creation of each person.

When we look at Genesis 2, where the creation of man and woman is recorded, it says, “Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.” The word ‘formed’ in this verse is used when a person makes pottery. I don’t know if you’ve ever worked with pottery, but the last time I did pottery was in junior high art class. I don’t remember what I made, but I do remember the process. As that pottery wheel is spinning and you throw that soft lump of clay toward the center of the wheel, you wet your hands and begin to shape and form the clay. You can give it a concave or a convex shape. You can make it short and wide or tall and skinny. You stick your thumbs through the top to create the opening. Every contour, every detail of your piece of pottery comes from your very hands. You, as the creator decided on its design and purpose. You get to decide whether it’ll be a cup to hold pencils or from which to drink tea or whether it’s going to be a flower pot or a vase to hold fresh flowers. That is your prerogative, your right, because you are the creator.

The Bible quite often uses the imagery of a potter when it talks about God, especially in the book of Isaiah. Isaiah tells us that there is a logical, rational relationship between the potter and the clay. The clay doesn’t determine anything. The clay doesn’t tell the potter to make it into this or that. These are rights that belong solely and exclusively to the potter, to God.

The other idea that comes out is from Isaiah 64:8 where the writer speaks to God and says, “Yet you, LORD, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the **potter**; we are all the work of your hand.” Here it’s a cry for mercy. God, as our creator, as the potter, though you have every right to judge us for our sins, please have mercy. In the next verse he says, “Do not be angry beyond measure, Lord; do not remember our sins forever. Oh, look on us, we pray, for we are all your people.

This second understanding of God as the potter, as the creator and our Father, is what the psalmist has in mind. He’s saying, “God, my Father, your hands made me and formed me.” Or as the psalmist says in psalm 139, “you created my inmost being, you knit me together in my mother’s womb.”

Listen, you are not an accident. You are not a random collection of chance events. You are not just cells and bio-matter. Every one of you was formed personally, intimately by the hands of God. He formed your body, he determined your maleness or femaleness, he gave you your personality, your talents and abilities, he placed within you the innate sense of right and wrong. All of who you are is from God. This then should change everything.

Let’s look back to the psalm.

To the psalmist God being the creator implies that he is personal. Some people acknowledge that God created the world. They cannot intellectually and rationally come to the conclusion that something came out of nothing, so they believe in a Creator God, but they don't believe he is personal. In fact you'll hear a lot of modern people claim that they believe in a higher power or something like that, but not in a creator that's personal. Now I find that to be a very difficult and unreasonable position to believe. Consider humans for a moment. We are the most personal, relational, intimate creatures on our planet. We crave the company of others, not merely for safety, not merely for survival, not merely for procreation, but for emotional intimacy, to be personal. That's what it means to be a person. So I find it very difficult to see how humans, creatures that are so personal, could emerge, even over billions of years, through evolution, from an impersonal nothingness. Doesn't it make more sense, isn't it more believable that a God who is personal, made us, created us to be personal. That's one of the ways in which we are the image-bearers of God.

So, to the psalmist and to us, God being my personal creator means that my purpose and my identity and my relationships are all rooted in Him. And because God is the creator who is personal, we can pray to him, which is what these verses are. All of them constitute a prayer to God.

The situation that the psalmist is in, again is one of some kind of suffering. In verse 75 he says that he was afflicted. He asks for comfort and compassion. He prays for judgment against the arrogant. So while all this stuff is going on in his life, what does he pray? This is what we must learn.

Some things he already knows, and he recites those things back to God. Why? To strengthen his faith. He's talking to himself, he's telling himself what is true about God. What are some of those things? Well, we already mentioned that the psalmist confesses that God is the loving, personal, and intimate creator.

But, there is something else that he confesses that is remarkable. Look at verse 75:

<sup>75</sup> I know, LORD, that your laws are righteous,  
and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me.

It's very similar to what's written in Proverbs:

My son, do not despise the LORD'S discipline, and do not resent his rebuke, because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in. (**Prov 3:11–12**)

Which is later taken up in the New Testament in Hebrews 12:

<sup>7</sup> Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? <sup>8</sup> If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. <sup>9</sup> Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! <sup>10</sup> They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. <sup>11</sup> No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. (**Heb 12:7–11**)

It's remarkable that the psalmist prays this because we are told in some Christian circles that we shouldn't think this way. That it's okay to shake your fist up at God, even to get angry with Him.

Recently I was listening to a panel of renowned pastors and scholars of which one was theologian R.C. Sproul. A person wrote in with this question:

“I am trying to reconcile the death of my adult son, whom I believe not to be saved with my Christian faith. How do I deal with my anger with God and this long dark night of the soul?”

In a very calm and compassionate, but deadly earnest tone Dr. Sproul replied,

Repent, and repent in dust and ashes. Crawl over glass in repentance if you're angry at God. There's never been anything that's happened to you in your whole life, including this great tragedy and most painful experience, that could ever possibly justify being angry at God. There are ten million reason why he should be angry at you. God does not owe us a life without pain and tragedy. He's given us a life of grace and a promise of eternal felicity, and any being who does that for us, a hundred percent graciously, can never righteously be the object of our anger, only of our gratitude.

The psalmist doesn't know or understand everything about the suffering he's going through, but what he does know is that God's laws are righteous and that God is faithful. It's very much like what was said in the sermon given a couple weeks ago, that the two truths about God that must be undeniably true for us, is that God is just and God is good. We must confess these truths to God. Not to remind him, but for our benefit. It's important to believe these two things because if we don't then we couldn't pray the rest of this psalm. Let's take a closer look.

We don't have the time to mention all of the things he prays, so let's just talk about a couple.

First he prays that others would be impacted by his testimony. Look at verses 74 and 79:

- <sup>74</sup> May those who fear you rejoice when they see me,  
for I have put my hope in your word.  
<sup>79</sup> May those who fear you turn to me,  
those who understand your statutes.

What's truly remarkable about his prayer is how God-centered it is. The psalmist is praying and asking that when other Christians, other God-fearers, that is, those who honor and revere God, see what I'm going through, my suffering, and when they see the way that I'm going through that suffering, which is putting my hope in the Word of God, which is the same as putting my hope in God, may they praise you God. It's very similar to what Jesus said in the sermon on the mount, though he wasn't addressing suffering specifically.

In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. (**Matthew 5:16**)

So, not only does the psalmist care about receiving comfort and compassion during his suffering, he cares just as much about the way he handles his suffering and how it will bless others, and cause them to praise God.

*Being a pastor takes me to the bedside of many saints at the hospital. Many of these saints I've known for over 20 years, but one particular saint stands out. She was an old lady, a wife, a grandmother, who was withering away from cancer. And I of course wanted to go to bless her and pray for her and comfort her. But when I entered the room, a smile was beaming across her emaciated face and as we chatted, there was no anger, no resentment, no bitterness. Only joy and thanksgiving for the life she got to live and for the savior who died for her. She talked about how she looked forward to seeing Jesus. So we prayed and I left just blown away. I was filled with thanksgiving to God for allowing me to meet this godly saint. And I resolved that this is how I wish to die.*

That's what suffering well will do. We don't know how many will be blessed--nurses and doctors, friends and family who visit, they will all be blessed when they see you at a time when you should be at your worst, but instead, you're at your very best, trusting, loving, and hoping in the Lord.

The other thing he prays is for comfort and compassion. In verses 76-77 he writes,

<sup>76</sup> May your unfailing love be my comfort,  
according to your promise to your servant.  
<sup>77</sup> Let your compassion come to me that I may live,  
for your law is my delight.

When we are going through suffering, what we need more than anything, is the comfort and compassion of God. Yes, we, especially as the body of Christ, need to show deep love and compassion to others, but what we need even more is God's touch in our lives.

In Paul's second letter to the Corinthians he writes:

<sup>1:3</sup> Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, <sup>4</sup> who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. <sup>5</sup> For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. <sup>6</sup> If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. <sup>7</sup> And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.

How is God's comfort and compassion experienced?

--His personal presence by the Holy Spirit. He will never leave us or forsake us. This is a glorious mystery.

--The peace that surpasses all human understanding. (Friend who recently lost a parent)

--Knowing that we will be exempt from the most terrible and deserved suffering, God's judgment and hell.

--The comfort of God is most shown in knowing and experiencing God's hesed, unfailing love. And where was the unfailing love of God most dramatically and explicitly shown? It's at the cross. It's in the suffering and sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Friends, because we were created by God, through Jesus, we can go to him in prayer to receive the help that we need. Confess to God the truths about God, to strengthen your faith. Cry out for compassion and comfort. And ask God that you would suffer well, so others would praise our Father.

Let's pray.