

Text – Psalm 22

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?

² O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.

*³ Yet you are holy,
enthroned on the praises^[a] of Israel.*

*⁴ In you our fathers trusted;
they trusted, and you delivered them.*

*⁵ To you they cried and were rescued;
in you they trusted and were not put to shame.*

*⁶ But I am a worm and not a man,
scorned by mankind and despised by the people.*

*⁷ All who see me mock me;
they make mouths at me; they wag their heads;*

*⁸ “He trusts in the Lord; let him deliver him;
let him rescue him, for he delights in him!”*

*⁹ Yet you are he who took me from the womb;
you made me trust you at my mother's breasts.*

*¹⁰ On you was I cast from my birth,
and from my mother's womb you have been my God.*

¹¹ Be not far from me,

*for trouble is near,
and there is none to help.*

*¹² Many bulls encompass me;
strong bulls of Bashan surround me;
¹³ they open wide their mouths at me,
like a ravening and roaring lion.*

*¹⁴ I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint;
my heart is like wax;
it is melted within my breast;
¹⁵ my strength is dried up like a potsherd,
and my tongue sticks to my jaws;
you lay me in the dust of death.*

*¹⁶ For dogs encompass me;
a company of evildoers encircles me;
they have pierced my hands and feet^[b]—
¹⁷ I can count all my bones—
they stare and gloat over me;
¹⁸ they divide my garments among them,
and for my clothing they cast lots.*

*¹⁹ But you, O Lord, do not be far off!
O you my help, come quickly to my aid!
²⁰ Deliver my soul from the sword,
my precious life from the power of the dog!
²¹ Save me from the mouth of the lion!
You have rescued^[c] me from the horns of the
wild oxen!*

*²² I will tell of your name to my brothers;
in the midst of the congregation I will praise*

you:

²³ *You who fear the Lord, praise him!
All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him,
and stand in awe of him, all you offspring of
Israel!*

²⁴ *For he has not despised or abhorred
the affliction of the afflicted,
and he has not hidden his face from him,
but has heard, when he cried to him.*

²⁵ *From you comes my praise in the
great congregation;
my vows I will perform before those who fear
him.*

²⁶ *The afflicted^[d] shall eat and be satisfied;
those who seek him shall praise the Lord!
May your hearts live forever!*

²⁷ *All the ends of the earth shall remember
and turn to the Lord,
and all the families of the nations
shall worship before you.*

²⁸ *For kingship belongs to the Lord,
and he rules over the nations.*

²⁹ *All the prosperous of the earth eat and
worship;
before him shall bow all who go down to the
dust,
even the one who could not keep himself
alive.*

³⁰ *Posterity shall serve him;*

*it shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation;
31 they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn, that he has done it.*

Main Point

Suffering to the Glory of God

Introduction (250)

Hook

Please turn to psalm 22.

There is an account of a pastor being captured in Korea by the communists. A large pit was dug and he, his wife and two boys were thrown into it. The communist captors gave the man an ultimatum: Denounce Christ or him and his whole family would be buried alive. Hard to imagine the inner turmoil. The man was torn, but encouraged by his family, he stood strong. The captors carried out their threat.

It is said that the family sang a hymn as they were buried, the smaller voices being smothered out first before all was quiet.

Do you think this family felt forsaken by God?

Or more importantly do you think they were forsaken by God?

In this psalm we learn of one who felt forsaken by God, and of one who was truly forsaken by God.

In this psalm we will learn something about the suffering of king David and of King Jesus, and from their suffering we will see that our own suffering, and even extreme suffering like this family, is never God forsaking us, but in fact part of His plan and still to his glory.

Outline

Messianic psalm.

We are just looking at some broad strokes.

Many sermons could be preached to understand the depth, hight and richness found in this psalm. We are just doing a bird's eye view. Many treasures left untaped.

To help us work through this psalm I have divided it into three parts:

- 1.Suffering Felt (v1-11)
- 2.Suffering Dealt (v12- 21)
- 3.Suffering Finished (v21-31)

Part 1 – Suffering Felt - v 1-11 (800)

Exposition (400)

David feels forsaken by God

The Psalm begins with those very famous verses.
“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Our minds automatically jump to the cross where Jesus cried those lines out in his agony, but these verses were first written, cried out, and felt by David, the king of Israel.

We don't know the exact series of events which led David to write this psalm. But it is clear to see his suffering was sharp and keenly felt. And in the midst of his suffering he feels deserted.

He feels forsaken by God. He feels that God is no longer with him. He feels God is not hearing his prayers. Despite continual and earnest prayer by day and by night he finds not rest. He finds no peace.

Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?

² O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.

He feels helpless and fragile. He calls himself a worm. He feels he has no worth, and no strength. Those around him mock and ridicule him for his trust in the Lord.

In his time of suffering, his faith in God is a point of attack. Look at verse 6 to 8.

*⁶ But I am a worm and not a man,
scorned by mankind and despised by the
people.*

*⁷ All who see me mock me;
they make mouths at me; they wag their
heads;*

*⁸ "He trusts in the Lord; let him deliver him;
let him rescue him, for he delights in him!"*

Trust in God is still well placed

Yet in the midst of his suffering, he still trusts God and turns to Him. Even in his opening cry of despair "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*". He is still praying to His God. It is a cry of perplexity yes, not of bitterness.

And we see this all the clearer in verses 3-5.

*³ Yet you are holy,
enthroned on the praises^[a] of Israel.*

*⁴ In you our fathers trusted;
they trusted, and you delivered them.*

*⁵ To you they cried and were rescued;
in you they trusted and were not put to
shame.*

God is holy. God is trustworthy. God is faithful. These aspects of God's character have been displayed again and again in the past and David is convinced of this.

But David knows God's faithfulness personally too. In verses 9-11 he brings to mind his own dependence on God in this sin-cursed world. He remembers back to his birth and as a nursing child that it was God who ultimately sustained him.

*⁹ Yet you are he who took me from the womb;
you made me trust you at my mother's
breasts.*

*¹⁰ On you was I cast from my birth,
and from my mother's womb you have been
my God.*

God has proved himself faithful to David's ancestors, and to him. And in the midst of his suffering, he reminds himself of God's faithfulness.

David's feeling of separation from God is not an accusation against God, or a perceived flaw in God's character. David is a sinful man and separation from God is what he deserves.

A sinful man cannot be in the presence of the Holy God.

But yet David shows explicit trust in God. There is nowhere and no-one else better to turn to. He knows he is not worthy; he knows he deserves to be forsaken, but that does not stop him from calling to the only one who can help.

And we know that that trust is well placed, and David is not truly forsaken as we shall soon see.

Jesus Was actually forsaken

But let us turn our attention to when this portion of the prophetic psalm was fulfilled.

When He was nailed to the cross, Jesus cried out: *“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”*.

But for him it was not just a subjective feeling. He was truly forsaken by God.

He was considered guilty of sin and was forsaken by God.

He was considered to be guilty of the worst of crimes you can think of. Lying, thieving, murder, adultery, rape, abuse, abortion. Guilty of all sorts of violence against the innocent. He was considered guilty of idolatry of heart and of action. He was considered a blasphemer and disobeyer of parents.

These heinous crimes, and others, were placed on his record and he was deemed guilty of them all. We know this to be true because these are your sins and mine. These are the sins of the people he would save.

Think of II Cor 5:21

²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

And the Holy God forsook him. He removed his countenance and all sense of his presence to Jesus. God poured out his wrath and justice on Jesus because the sins deserved it. Jesus bore our sins and the punishment for them so that we may be righteous in God's sight.

Application (400)

No real forsaking for a Christian

Jesus was forsaken in our place.

There are times when you may feel forsaken by God. Those times will happen. But this is always a subjective feeling never an objective truth.

Always a lie we are tempted to believe and not a truth affirmed in scripture.

As a Christian, nothing can separate you from the Love of God. No person in Christ can ever be forsaken by God, because Jesus was forsaken in your place. Yes, suffering will come, the pain will be felt, the tears will flow and the heart will ache. But we will never be forsaken by God.

In the midst of suffering, we rest on God's character, as David did. We remember his holiness, and his faithfulness. We remember his promises and we remember the great work of

our saviour when he suffered in our place to spare us the ultimate suffering.

Seriousness of Sin

But that is only helpful to the one who is trusting that Jesus was forsaken in their place.

Punishment for your sin is either borne by Jesus or by yourself. It is that simple, and this psalm reminds us of that.

Yes, suffering is felt keenly by both the Christians and those who do not believe.

But for any who do not believe in Jesus as Lord and saviour, any suffering is a reminder of the ultimate suffering that is to come. This world is the best things will ever get. The suffering of this world will seem sweet compared to the torments of hell.

But for the Christian, all suffering is a reminder that our saviour suffered to rescue us. This world is the worst things will ever get.

So, believe in Jesus, let him carry your sins in your place, take heed of the present suffering and be spared from eternal suffering.

Part 2 – Suffering Dealt (800) v12-21

Exposition

Keep that distinction of suffering in your mind as we continue with the study of the psalm. Going

form the suffering felt, let us move to the Suffering Dealt in verses 12-21.

Beastly character of the enemies

Notice how David describes his enemies who are inflicting his suffering. They are described as dangerous and wild animals intent to tear him to shreds.

We have Bulls, lions, dogs, wild oxen all bent on destroying David. The images are to make you makes you think of their power, their sharp fanged, and their razor claws.

Look at verse 12 and 13

¹² *Many bulls encompass me;
strong bulls of Bashan surround me;*
¹³ *they open wide their mouths at me,
like a ravening and roaring lion.*

And again in verse 16.

¹⁶ *For dogs encompass me;
a company of evildoers encircles me;
they have pierced my hands and feet^[b]—*

David feels surrounded by these beastly enemies. No way out. No way to escape. They are strong, influential, intent on ripping, boasting, plundering, stealing, devouring and dominating.

David Left for dead

And David is basically left for dead.

Look at Verse 14-15

*¹⁴ I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint;
my heart is like wax;
it is melted within my breast;
¹⁵ my strength is dried up like a potsherd,
and my tongue sticks to my jaws;
you lay me in the dust of death.*

His heart turns to utter helplessness, he is weak and in extreme pain and all courage has left him. No glimmer of hope left. Death is imminent.

Jesus Left for Dead

And of course you cannot read verses 14 to 18 without your thoughts going straight to Jesus and his torment before his imminent death. These verses are astonishing in the detail of the description of the crucifixion.

It is astounding because there was no such thing as death by crucifixion in the time of David. The earliest record of execution by crucifixion was 500 years later during the Persian Dynasty.

And yet in these verses we have details of the agonizes a man goes through from death by crucifixion. David's poetic language, through the inspiration of the Spirit becomes a literal prophecy.

Look closely at verses 14-18 and see, with the benefit of hindsight, the graphic description of crucifixion.

¹⁴ *I am poured out like water,* (Think of intense sweating due to the agonizing pain and blood pouring out of wounds)

and all my bones are out of joint; (Shoulders, hands, and arms would all be pulled out of joint as Jesus hung there on the cross)

my heart is like wax;

it is melted within my breast; (Think here of both hopelessness of the situation, but also of the physical strain on the heart as the muscles become weaker and weaker)

¹⁵ *my strength is dried up like a potsherd,*
and my tongue sticks to my jaws; (Think here of extreme thirst. The extreme pain, physical effort and loss of blood would have severely dehydrated Jesus,)

you lay me in the dust of death. (and eventually Jesus breaths his last)

¹⁶ *For dogs encompass me;*

a company of evildoers encircles me; (Here you get the public nature of the crucifixion)

they have pierced my hands and feet^[b]— (Of course you think of the nails piercing Christ during the crucifixion)

¹⁷ I can count all my bones— (This is a stunning detail to the crucifixion of Jesus. Although it was common practice to break the legs of the crucified by crushing them with a hammer, this did not happen to Jesus and he can still “count his bones” as it were)

they stare and gloat over me; (Again we see the public nature and public humiliation found in Crucifixion)

Now, individually each of these verses could be describing a host of suffering and executions, but all together they are a graphic picture of death by crucifixion.

And then to top of this, there is verse 18 which prophecies how even the executioners of the Messiah would divide up their loot.

*¹⁸ they divide my garments among them,
and for my clothing they cast lots.*

Application

Our suffering different

And so in these few verses we see suffering dealt out by the enemies of David and the enemies of Jesus. We see David speaking of his own experience, as a type of Christ. An experience which would later be fulfilled by the Messiah.

You and I will never suffer in this way. We will never suffer to the extent of Jesus (or David for that matter), although we will suffer.

Christ's suffering is worst because he suffered the penalty for sin, the wrath of God and the consequence of our sins. We never suffer the penalty of sin. Suffering as a Christian is never punitive, it is never the punishment for your sin. Jesus has paid for that sin and there is nothing left to pay.

But yet, a disciple will not be greater than his master. And this is true too with suffering. The enemies of Jesus have become the enemies of his followers. The disciples too feel the claws and fangs of the devil and sin.

Suffering for the Glory of God

But our suffering is not pointless nor insignificant. As hard as it is to accept, suffering to the Christian, is for their good and for the glory of God. In the midst of suffering this is

near impossible to see. But hindsight allows us this perspective.

This is best illustrated by the crucifixion. In hindsight we see that this darkest hours, this torture and death, is in fact a triumphant event. This event of pain and suffering is the very means for the salvation of man. In the midst of depraved actions of violence, God receives much glory as he displays his justice and mercy.

Also recall the Korean family buried alive. In the midst of their suffering and murder, the people watching were confronted by this event and would later turn to Jesus as their lord and saviour. God did not save this family from death, but He did not forsake them. He welcomed them into his kingdom as his children. And he used their murder, as sinful as it is, to save other sinners from eternity in hell.

What men and Satan meant for evil, God meant for Good.

We can see that with the crucifixion, with stories of the past, and we must cling to that as we go through our own suffering and as we weep with those who weep, and mourn with those who mourn. Suffering is not pointless. In the midst of it we do not know how, but we can trust that it is for our good and for the glory of God.

Part 3 – Suffering Finished (800) 21-31

Exposition (400)

With that thought, let us move on to our third and final section. Suffering finished. 21-31

David's Praying is suddenly answered

Did you notice in verse 20 and 21 how close and imminent the end is for David?

The sword of his enemy is about to descend upon his head. The dogs are about to tear him to shreds, the lion is about deal his killing blow.

And then all of a sudden, in the middle of verse 21 there is a change. God intervenes.

*²⁰ Deliver my soul from the sword,
my precious life from the power of the dog!*

²¹ Save me from the mouth of the lion!

***You have rescued^[c] me from the horns
of the wild oxen!***

The prayer turns from a plea of protection (*Save me*), to a shout of praise. ***You have rescued^[c]***

David Want's all to know how God has delivered him

God has delivered David! The enemy is conquered. In a metaphorical sense, God has brought David back to life.

And David bursts forth in praise and adoration. He stands in awe and glorifies God. And what is significant is that David is so enthralled, so in-awed and so grateful of God's deliverance that he wants all to know of God's mighty work.

David wants his fellow Israelites to know

*²² I will tell of your name to my brothers;
in the midst of the congregation I will praise
you:*

*²³ You who fear the Lord, praise him!
All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him,
and stand in awe of him, all you offspring of
Israel!*

But David wants this news of God's work to go beyond the nation of Israel. He expects all the people of the world to hear it. And when they hear of it, they will worship the Lord. They will bow the knee to the King of kings. God will exercise kingship. This will include all kinds of people the rich and poor, proud and humble, weak and strong. Notice this specifically in verses 27 to 28.

*²⁷ All the ends of the earth shall remember
and turn to the Lord,
and all the families of the nations
shall worship before you.*

*²⁸ For kingship belongs to the Lord,
and he rules over the nations.*

But that is not enough. This news of God's deliverance must also be told to the next generation, to those yet unborn. Look at verse 30 and 31

*³⁰ Posterity shall serve him;
it shall be told of the Lord to the
coming generation;*

*³¹ they shall come and proclaim his
righteousness to a people yet unborn,
that he has done it.*

Gospel proclaimed to the ends of the earth

Now when we realise the prophetic nature of this psalm, these verses are just as astounding as the description of the crucifixion.

These verses are a description of the Gospel spreading to the whole world. The deliverance of David is a type of God resurrecting Jesus.

The news of the resurrection and offer of deliverance to all who believe in Him is to spread to the whole world and to all generations.

These verses are echoed in the familiar words of Jesus at his ascension. Remember, just before Jesus is taken up into heaven he tells his disciples:

⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my

witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Acts 1:8.

It is finished

This is all the more amplified when you notice the last line of psalm.

he has done it.

In the Hebrew there is no object, and the line just says “He has done” and this could just as well be translated as “it is finished”.

The very words Jesus cried out on the cross before he died. Words of triumph in the face of a fallen enemy. A victory cry over sin and death.

What had been done? What was finished?

Sin had been paid for. The righteous demands of God for sins’ punishment had been fully satisfied, and the righteousness of God was now freely offered to all who believe.

Application (400)

Since “it is finished” don’t hold back your praise

Since it is finished, we too proclaim with joy our praise and adoration. Since it is finished we can accept the free offer of salvation. Since it is finished we too bow the knee to our King Jesus. He has redeemed us and we now owe him total

allegiance. We praise him, worship him, obey him, submit to him and adore him.

Since “it is finished” don’t hold back your witness

But not only that we also proclaim him. Just like David who proclaimed his own deliverance to his friends, his country men and to the world.

Explaining the Good news of salvation, with the aim to persuade others, is a natural outflow of understanding our own deliverance. A natural outflow of understanding what Jesus endured. A natural outflow of grasping that Jesus suffered in our place.

You and I are living out this prophecy. We are at the ends of the earth and we are many generations removed.

You live out this prophecy if you believe that Jesus has paid for you sins, but you are also part of this prophecy when you proclaim this good news of deliverance to all who would hear.

So, take heart when you get the opportunity to share the gospel.

Take heart when you explain to your colleague the holiness of God and the hell punishment for sin.

Take heart when you can share to your sister or brother, the fact that Jesus has paid for sin.

Take heart when you show to your friend that the only necessary response for salvation is belief in the work of Jesus.

Take heart because you are being a witness of the greatest news anyone can bring.

Take heart because you are not alone in the declaration of this great news.

Take heart because you are on a mission for the King.

Take heart because your mission was planned out by the King in precise detail and foretold in this very psalm. A mission that was written 3000 years ago, partly fulfilled in Jesus 2000 years ago and continues to be fulfilled through your conversion and every time you proclaim the gospel.

Take heart because you are following the orders of the King.

Conclusion

Will you ever feel suffering on this mission? Yes.

You feel the pain, you will endure the agony and weep in anguish, you may even die, but you will never be forsaken. You suffer because you follow in his footsteps. And just as his suffering brought glory to God, you can trust that your suffering too will be use to the Glory of God.

We think of the intense cry of Jesus *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*. And truly He was forsaken. He bore the full penalty of sin. The wrath of God was poured out on him. The suffering was great.

And then in triumph, before he dies, he cried out *"It is finished"*. Victory has been won. The captives can be set free. The rebels can be made children

And since it is finished, we, the old captives, don't hold back our praise.

And since it is finished, we, the children, don't hold back our witness.

So let our praise and our witness be heard in our homes, in our church, in our schools, in our workplaces, in our streets, in our nation and in the far reaches of the world.

Let us proclaim *"His righteousness to a people yet unborn, that He has done it"*

Let us pray