

MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?

Psalm 22: 1-31 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

It is not clear as to whether this Psalm was written while David was running from Saul, when King Saul was trying to kill him, or when David was running from Absalom, his own treacherous son. Remember, David was reluctant and unwilling, himself, to fight against his own son, Absalom and against Absalom's forces. Nevertheless, whatever historical time it was in David's life, it was a time of tragic heartache for him. David was without a helper in verse 11. Yet, there is little more to say about David's situation that applies to Psalm 22. Why? It is because this Messianic Psalm goes far—far—beyond David's time and David's sorrow. Most of the Old Testament Scriptures that contain prophecy experience partial prophetic fulfillment during the time when the words were written. Then since the words of scripture are Messianic, final fulfillment comes in the time of the life of Christ. Psalm 22 is different. Most Bible students and scholars would agree that there is no corresponding time in David's life when these verses of Psalm 22 totally apply to him, or even seem to partially apply to him.

No incident in the life of David can begin to account for his words in Psalm 22. David's prophetic words defy a naturalistic explanation. The best explanation for David's words came from the mouth of Peter on the Day of Pentecost, when Peter said concerning another psalm of David, Psalm 16: 8-11, "Being therefore a prophet, he foresaw and spoke of the Christ." In Psalm 22, David, without knowing all he was saying under divine inspiration, was speaking of Jesus and the crucifixion as a prophet. It is amazing that David lived 1000 years before Jesus was born. During David's life time, no one had even heard of crucifixion. Jews put criminals to death by stoning. Psalm 22 was written around 1050 BC. So when did crucifixion begin? Crucifixion started first, according to historians, with the Persians, what is modern day Iran. Initially, the victim was suspended above ground to keep their feet from touching holy ground. The Phoenician traders picked up the practice and spread it to other cultures, including the Greeks. Alexander the Great, who was a Greek, introduced the practice to Carthage, where it was picked up by the Romans. The Romans started using it around the time Jesus was born. The Romans perfected crucifixion as a punishment designed to maximize pain and suffering in an excruciating attempt to torture in death. It wasn't about killing somebody only— it was about killing somebody in an unspeakably horrible way. Crucifixion is the most humiliating, disgraceful form of execution as the victim is stripped to be executed. Crucifixion usually was reserved for slaves, foreigners, revolutionaries, and the vilest of criminals. The only time a Roman citizen was ever crucified was for desertion from the Roman army.

On the day of Jesus' crucifixion, there were miraculous divine works of nature. There was an earthquake and there was darkness from noon to 3 PM. During this time of darkness is when God the Father turned His back on His beloved Son because Jesus had become sin for us, His people. II Corinthians 5: 21 tells us, "for our sake, He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." It was during this time when Jesus became sin for us that the darkness of judgment came. The wrath of God the Father was poured out on His Son. So hot and fiery and powerful was this wrath that the lights of heaven and creation had to be turned off. There were no lights in the windows of heaven—no sun, and no moon or stars. During this blackness, is what psalm 22 speaks of—the struggle, the pain, the agony, the loneliness, and finally death.

As we look at this psalm, it has two distinct and different parts. The first part is the Sob of the Son of God (verses 1-21) while the second part is the Song of the Son of God in verses 22-31. The key to the Sob of the Son of God is found in verse 2 which states, "O my God, I cry by day, but **You do not answer.**" Then there is the song of the Son of God and the key to the song is found in verse 24 where David says, "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.**" The sob in verses 1-21 tells of the sufferings of Messiah and the song in verses 22-31 tells of the glory that follows. Peter speaks of this in I Peter 1: 21 speaking of Jesus that "in the last times for the sake of you who through Him are believers in God, who raised Jesus up from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God." As we turn to this psalm, you may ask, "Who is the sufferer?" Is it David? Yes! But there is only one answer that fits all the facts...and that sufferer is Jesus. David the psalmist gives a more vivid description of the sufferings of Christ on the cross in many ways than even the Gospel writers. As we attempt to break down this psalm into one long sob and a final song, I want us to discover not only why this psalm is only fulfilled in Jesus, but also, I want us to see that this psalm is first of all, a powerful psalm for us as sufferers to claim, our sobs and finally, our song. What four lessons does God want us to learn through the psalmist's sob and song and through the Song of God's sob and His song?

LET'S LEARN THE POIGNANT LESSONS OF THE SOBBING OF THE PSALMIST (I.) Verses 1-21 first of all has lessons for us as individuals and as a church. What are they?

God wants us to be honest with Him. (1) There are times when Psalm 22 is more appropriate for us to sing or pray than is Psalm 23. Twenty one verses give us the lament of the psalmist who is feeling totally abandoned by God. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" God wants us to articulate our despair at the

apparent absence of God. Perhaps this morning you feel this way and you cry to God in v. 2—“I cry to You and you not answer.” If you could put into words the way you honestly feel, would it sound like David in Psalm 22? David is saying in Psalm 22: 14, 15, “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. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; You lay me in the dust of death.”

God wants us to know we are not alone in feeling abandoned by Him.(2) David felt like God was far away and unwilling to help him. I read in v. 11—“Be not far from me, for trouble is near, and there is none to help.” Life is not always a time for singing “The Hallelujah Chorus.” As we speak 4.4 million Americans are out of work. They have lost their jobs. 2.2 million Americans are going through foreclosure on their home mortgage as they are unable to pay their house payments. David was the first one to utter these words, but he is not the last. Countless millions of perplexed, suffering men and women of God have felt the heartache and pain of a broken heart.

God wants us to tell Him our questions, our perplexities, and our frustrations. (3) Perhaps many of you mothers in the hardest part of labor, before delivery of a son or daughter, have even cried out to God telling Him He has forsaken and forgotten you, when labor was almost too much for you to face. I know of plenty of mothers who have done just that. What do we as believers have to offer those who stand in front of closed doors which seem to have no key? Beloved, we can offer them the Lord Jesus Christ who has walked this lonely road. He Himself asked the Father, “My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me? Be sure God is not angry when we honestly tell Him we feel abandoned and we register His absence by crying out to Him with our “whys.” Even Jesus cried out with His question to God, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?” Secondly,

LET’S LEARN THE POIGNANT LESSONS OF THE SOBBING OF THE SON OF GOD. (II.) Verses 1-21 ultimately point only to our crucified Lord. **God wants us to know the cry of our forsaken Savior. (1)** Notice verses 1,2, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from saving Me from the words of My groaning? O My God, I cry by day, but You do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.” As Jesus was dying on the cross, he cried out in his native Aramaic, in Matthew 27: 46 and Mark 15: 34, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” These words are some of the most disturbing verses in all of Scripture. Here is the Son of God crying, sobbing out to God the Father His cry for help, but there is no answer, only silence. God the Father and God the Son eternally share the closest relationship. Communion was always constant 24/7

before that moment, and it eternally will be the same. Yet something was different. For these three dark hours as the Father blocked the light of the sun, Jesus was our Sin-Bearer, our Scapegoat, and our Sacrifice. He took our sins upon Himself and as Hebrews tells us, He went outside the camp, bearing our reproach—Hebrews 13: 12, 13. Jesus there paid the ultimate price for us. No one can imagine our forsaken Savior, but He was. While Jesus was bearing the sin of each of us, God the Father in His holiness and righteousness, had to look away and forsake Jesus. Think of it and never forget it. Your sin and my sin came between God the Son and God the Father. Sin caused this, not Jesus' sin, but our sin.

God wants us to know the character of Jesus our Savior who confessed as He was crucified the glory of His Father. (2)

I can hardly believe these words that Jesus confessed even as He was dying for us. (v. 3-5) I read these Messianic words, with Jesus confessing to the Father who had forsaken Him, “Yet You are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. In You our fathers trusted; they trusted and You delivered them. To You they cried and were rescued; in you they trusted and were not put to shame.” Even in the midst of the most horrendous physical and emotional and spiritual suffering, knowing He was forsaken by God the Father, Jesus remembered the character of His Father. Even while under the afflicting hand of the Father, accepting from the hands of men the punishment God the Father required of Jesus to atone for our sins, Jesus was still obedient and He still loved the Father. Jesus knew the Father's plan for saving you and me, and He was willing to submit perfectly. As the Son was sobbing, He reminded Himself that His holy Father could be trusted even as God the Father has never once been trusted in vain by those who know and love and trust Him in times past, present or future. Had someone cried out to Jesus, “Can You trust the Father now in the darkness as He has forsaken You?” Jesus' answer was a resounding “Yes!” Notice the sobbing words of the Son of God also in Psalm 22: 9-11. Hallelujah... What a...

God wants us to know the words of our mocked Savior. (3)

Notice verses 6-8. “But I am a worm, and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people, All who see Me mock Me; They make mouths at Me; they wag their heads; He trusts in the Lord; Let Him deliver Him; Let Him rescue Him, for He delights in Him!” Here is Jesus using David's psalm to picture Himself, the Lord of Glory as abased, not only lower than the angels, but lower than us as men and women. What a contrast between these Messianic words, “I am a worm,” and Jesus' words to Caiaphas, the high priest. Caiaphas asked Jesus in Mark 14: 61, 62, “Are You the Christ, Messiah, the Son of the Blessed?” And Jesus said, “I am, and you will see the Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven.” We know from the Gospels that almost everyone joined in the mocking—the Romans, the Jews, the soldiers,

the leaders, the religious teachers and leaders—all of them were shaking their heads and shouting insults and mocking him—calling Jesus to come down from the cross if He was the Son of God. These words of David are so close to the Gospel account, one commentator asks if this is prophecy or history. Go home and compare Psalm 22: 6-8 with Matthew 22: 39-44.

God wants us to see our crucified Savior. (4) Notice verses 12-18, “Many bulls encompass me; strong bulls of Bashan surround me; they open wide their mouths at me, like a ravening and roaring lion. 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; my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death. For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet--I can count all my bones-- they stare and gloat over me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.” There is no greater description of Jesus’ crucifixion. Here are the prophetic graphic details of the crucifixion and death of Jesus. The bones of his hands and arms and shoulders and pelvis were out of joint-v. 14. Perspiration and blood flowed from his body raging with fever of persecution—v. 14—being poured out like water. The beating of His heart was affected like wax, melted in His breast. This speaks of the utter weakness of Jesus as courage fled from Him as He hung dying, with each beat of the heart soon to be His last-v. 14. His strength was dried up like a potsherd or earthen vessel exposed to heat.- v. 15. His tongue stuck to his jaws speaks of the drying up of the vital juices that caused Christ's excessive thirst (John 19:28). There Jesus was laid in the dust of death. Here Jesus tells the Father, You are sovereign and You are laying Me in the dust of death-v15, His hands and feet were pierced as He was encompassed by Gentiles, Roman soldiers, who were called dogs. He was stripped of His clothes hanging in nakedness or mostly nakedness and in His emaciated state, Jesus bones were now visible through His shredded flesh. They stared at Him, v. 17—meaning they feasted their eyes on His body in the throes of death. They divided His garments, and for his vesture, they mockingly cast lots—horseplay at the foot of Calvary. Why did He put up with this? It was because He promised to clothe us in robes of His righteousness.

God wants us to hear our dying Savior’s hopeful cry to the Father in His last dying breaths. (5) We read in verses 19-21, “But You, O Lord, do not be far off! O You, My help, come quickly to My aid! (I believe Jesus was asking the Father for strength now to die.) Deliver my soul from the sword. God did. His side was not pierced until His body hung dead on the cross. Deliver My precious life from the power of the dog! Save Me from the mouth of the lion! You have rescued Me from the horns of the wild oxen.” Jesus even yet called the Father in v. 19, O You,

my help/strength. Here in these last breaths, I cry as I hear Jesus crying—“It is finished. Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.” Psalm 22: 21b is clear, “You have rescued Me from the horns of the wild oxen.” The Sob is turning to a song. The Son knew again that God’s presence was with Him in death. The sin debt was paid. He paid it all. Jesus died a victorious death. What seemed to appear as the greatest defeat is the greatest victory in history for you and for me. May we stand in awe of Jesus and worship Him for His atoning sacrifice. May we copy His example of trust through the most difficult trials of our lives to His glory. Thirdly,

LET’S LEARN THE PRAISING LESSONS OF THE PSALMIST AND HIS SONG WHEN GOD DID DELIVER HIM. (III.)

This is found in verses 22-26. When deliverance comes to us, do we praise as David did? Do we sing in front of our brothers and sisters? I love verse 22—It’s testimony time—“I will tell of Your Name to my brothers in the midst of the congregation.” Don’t miss Sunday night church if you can help it, church. It’s testimony time—to tell of God’s deliverance in the midst of your brothers and sisters. He leads in a cheer—v.23 As I finished this message after 10 PM Friday night, Audrey my daughter called-Pastor Jadon is the first Associate Pastor of the Meridian Friends Church. Tell story of what happened when they arrived from 6:30 to 9:00. Whole church did it. Lastly,

LET’S LEARN THE PRAISING LESSONS OF THE SON OF GOD WHEN GOD DELIVERED HIM BOTH IN DYING AND IN RESURRECTION.

(IV.) Verses 27-31 are more than restored hope. God’s will was accomplished at the cross, at the grave, and in the resurrection. The Son of God is now exalted, His Name magnified above every Name. The praise in these verses is Messianic. Camp on verse 31. **He has done it.** In 1973, in her album, “Laughter in Your Soul, Jamie Owens-Collins released a mighty song, “The Victor.” This song was championed by Steve Green and Keith Green. The words, “Swallowed into earth’s dark womb, Death has triumphed That’s what they say But try to hold him in the tomb The Son of Life Rose on the third day Look! The gates of hell are falling Crumbling from the inside out He’s bursting through the walls with laughter Listen to the angels shout. “It is finished, He has done it, Life conquered death, Jesus Christ Has won it! His plan of battle fooled them all They led him off to Calvary to die But as he entered Hades hall He broke those hellish chains with a cry Just listen to the demons screaming See him bruise the serpent’s head The prisoners of hell redeeming All the power of death is dead It is finished He has done it Life conquered death Jesus Christ Has won it!