

## The Psalm of the Cross – *Psalm 22:1-21*

**Introduction** – No Christian can read these verses without being vividly confronted with the crucifixion. And this is because Jesus Himself saw the crucifixion in these words. Some have thought that when He began reciting/chanting Psalm 22:1, He continued until He got to Psalm 31, “*into Your hand I commit my spirit.*” While a Psalm of David, the language defies David’s individual experiences, and so, as Peter mentioned regarding another Davidic Psalm “*being a prophet...he, foreseeing this, spoke...*” (Acts 2:30f). David teaches us in this Psalm where to go when men, even strong men, collapse in despair. The king’s despair is wrapped with faith in Yahweh. Today is Palm Sunday, the memorial of the victory march of Christ before the victory was won; an early victory march because of the unswerving faith of Christ in His God and Father.

**A Faithful Prayer in the Midst of Despair** (vv1-2) – The psalmist (and Jesus, cf. Matt 27:46) gives a cry of despair. However, in this deep sense of being forsaken, Christ still quotes Scripture and complains to “*my God, my God.*” True prayer in times of deep distress is mixed with these contrary, interwoven affections. His prayers and groanings appear to have gone unheard and yet He continues to pray to Almighty God as though He is listening. In faith, we are to see that when it appears we have been beating the air, and though no answer appears to be coming, we should not desist from this duty and opportunity. Jesus obeys His own words, “*men always ought to pray, and not lose heart*” (Luke 18:1).

**Remember God’s Faithfulness in Past Stories** (vv3-5) – He should not lose heart because of the character of God and because of His past record. He knows God is holy; He knows God enthrones Himself in the praises of His people (v3) and He knows this because God’s hand has always been stretched forth to deliver His people (vv4-5). And so, the psalmist argues with praise, “*they trusted...trusted...trusted*” and You answered. This is how our arguing prayers with God should go (Phil 4:6-7).

**A Faithful Prayer over the Mocking Crowd** (vv6-8) – “Yes, go ahead and trust,” the enemies mock, and this is just what happened as Jesus hung on the cross (Matt 27:38-44); they say just what the Psalm said they would say. The soldiers who beat and crucified Him, the passersby who spit, the religious leaders who blasphemed, the thief on the cross who cursed Him, and over it all the prayer of the Christ, “*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do*” (Luke 23:34). The psalmist describes Himself as a helpless, downtrodden worm, passive while crushed and despised by those who trod upon Him. The mocking of men is one of the hardest trials to endure, for it tests our ability to trust in promises not yet fulfilled in the face of ridicule from the establishment. But remember and take note: the complaint is made before God. The Psalmist will not refrain from demanding His presence, His answer, His deliverance.

**Remember God’s Faithfulness in Your Past** (vv9-11) – The great Psalmist, while hanging on the cross, could see His mother (John 19:25-26), and in this prayer, He reminds God that He trusted God since His nativity, enumerating the benefits God had already bestowed upon Him. From before the time you could reason, God has been near and teaching you to trust Him. Now He prays and argues that trouble is near, therefore do not be far from me (v11).

**A Faithful Prayer in the Torment of Crucifixion** – (vv12-18) – A thousand years before it happened, David saw by means of the Spirit, that Christ would have his hands and feet pierced (v16), that He would die at the hands of his strong enemies (vv12-13) and that it would be an agonizing death (vv15, 17). Even the details of his garments being gambled over are there (v18, John 19:23-24). He would thirst terribly (v15, John 19:28). Jesus found fellowship in David’s sufferings, and found Himself arguing these prophetic verses before His Father while hanging on a tree. We are invited through this Psalm and the Gospels to have fellowship with our Savior in His sufferings as well. This is where we practice, so that we learn to argue, pray, and trust through our own sufferings before the face of God.

**Remember God’s Faithfulness Promised for the Future** (vv19-21) – The Psalmist wants deliverance, salvation, and vindication, but only from Yahweh His Strength, for He knows that Yahweh is His only hope. It is here that one learns, “*when I am weak, then I am strong*” (2 Cor 12:10). It is also here that there is a stark climax and change to the Psalm. First the cry, “*Save me from the lion’s mouth and from the horns of the wild ox...*” followed by a declaration, “*You have answered Me.*” The tortuous death of Jesus Christ did not prevent His resurrection from bearing witness that He had been heard. This was no cry of defeat, but an agonizing cry, an agonizing song - of victory.

**The Heart of the Gospel** – There is a sharp turn in the song of the Psalmist from this point on. But we must pause and ask if what was described in the first part is for us; is it for you? This was prophesied of a millennium before it was fulfilled; in fact, it was determined before the foundations of the world (Eph 1:3-10). It was there, at the cross, that the enemies of God “won.” And in their accomplishment, they lost, for God accomplished through them what His hand and purpose had determined (Acts 4:25-28). And so, in the week beginning with Palm Sunday, Christ would say, “*Now is the judgment of this*

*world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself” (John 12:31-32).*

*Dave Hatcher – Palm Sunday, April 14, 2019*