

Psalm 22 – part 1

Introduction – 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. Beyond this, however, this Psalm is certainly the Psalm of the Cross. The language defies David's individual experiences and certainly, as Peter describes regarding another Messianic Psalm, "*being a prophet...he, foreseeing this, spoke...*" (Acts 2:30f). And so, we will consider this Psalm in light of Jesus' fulfillment of it and then our use of it as His people. We will do so this Palm Sunday in light of the Week of the Passion of Christ and next Resurrection Sunday in light of the Victory of Christ.

Faithful Despair (vv1-2) – The Psalm-singer (and Jesus Himself, 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).

God's Work in the Past (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 Psalm-singer argues with praise, "*they trusted...trusted...trusted*" and You answered. This is how our arguing prayers with God should go (Phil 4:6-7).

The Mockery of the Crucifixion (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). And so the Psalm-singer 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 Psalm-singer will not refrain from demanding His presence, His answer, His deliverance.

Reminded to Trust God (vv9-11) – The great Psalm-singer, 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).

Torment Through 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. It is then that we learn to argue through our own sufferings before the face of God.

My Only Hope, My Only Help: Answer Me! (vv19-21) – The Psalm-singer 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*" (2Cor 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*" followed by a declaration, "*You have answered me from the horns of the wild ox!*" The 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 Psalm-singer 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 4:25-27). 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).