

31. The Book of Psalms 22:1-8

The Good Shepherd-Part 1

a message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier
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This morning I want to draw your attention to Psalm 22.

Psalms 22, 23, and 24 form a trilogy on 'Christ the Shepherd.'

- In Psalm 22, the theme is "*The Good Shepherd Who dies for the sheep.*" (John 10:11)
- In Psalm 23, the theme is "*The Great Shepherd Who lives and cares for the sheep.*" (Hebrews 13:20–21)
- In Psalm 24, the theme is "*The Chief Shepherd Who returns in glory to reward and reign over His sheep.*" (1 Peter 5:4)

The old Baptist preacher J. Vernon McGee said with regard to Psalm 22:

"There are several Scriptures with which I never feel adequate to deal. This is one of them. When we come to Psalm 22, I feel that we are standing on holy ground, and we should take off our spiritual shoes."

Some have called Psalm 22—"*The Psalm of the Cross*" because through this psalm we get a look at the crucifixion of Jesus from a unique vantage point. Not from the vantage point of standing on the ground looking up at Jesus while He's hanging on the cross—not at all.

You see, in this psalm, Jesus is speaking while *He's* hanging on the cross looking down and describing what He sees and what He's feeling as He's being crucified! (No wonder McGee calls it 'holy ground!')

*How do we even know that Psalm 22 is about Jesus? **The whole Bible is about Jesus!*** (Psalm 40:7)

Luke 24:44 (NKJV)

⁴⁴ Then He said to them, "These *are* the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and *the* Prophets and **the Psalms** concerning Me."

"Okay, but how do we know that this psalm is Jesus speaking from the cross?"

Because the Psalm opens up with the words, "**My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?**" And ends with—"**It is finished**"—two statements Jesus made from the cross. In between we get a glimpse of the crucifixion of Christ that leaves us breathless and awestruck at what our Savior went through that we might have our sins forgiven and a place in heaven someday.

As I said, even though David is technically the author, Jesus is speaking through him—and so in that regard David is acting as a *prophet* (a spokesman for God). Besides that, in Acts 2:30 Peter calls David a prophet.

I'm calling this message, "**The Good Shepherd**" from John 10:11 where Jesus said, "*I am the Good Shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.*"

Understand that the whole psalm isn't about the crucifixion—the first 21 verses of the psalm deals with the *crucifixion* of Christ while verses 22-31 deals with the *resurrection* of Christ.

And so, with that in mind, the psalm is divided into two parts:

I. **The Suffering Savior's Prayer—verse 22:1–21**

II. **The Risen Savior's Praise—verse 22:22–31**

Let's focus on the first part:

I. **The Suffering Savior's Prayer—verse 22:1–21**

Psalm 22:1–2 (NKJV)

¹ My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? *Why are You so far from helping Me, And from the words of My groaning?* ² O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; And in the night season, and am not silent.

The gospels record that Jesus spent 6 hours on the cross the day of His crucifixion consisting of 3 hours of light and 3 hours of darkness. Mark and Luke tell us that Jesus was crucified at the third hour (9 AM) and from the sixth hour (noon) until the ninth hour (3 PM) there was darkness over all the land.

Some have proposed that this was the result of an eclipse—but that couldn't have been because it was Passover time and Passover always takes place during a full moon. During a full moon the moon is on the opposite side of the earth from an eclipse.

I believe that this was a supernatural darkness—almost as if, as one author put it, *"the creation could no longer bear to see its Creator suffering on that cross and closed its eyes."*

So, when Jesus said in Psalm 22:2, **"O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; And in the night season, and am not silent"**—He was referring to the 3 hours of light followed by the 3 hours of darkness that He prayed, crying out to His Father while on the cross.

David began this psalm with the words, **"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"**

A thousand years later, Matthew records Jesus crying out those very words from the cross—

Matthew 27:46 (NKJV)

⁴⁶ And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

Why did the Father forsake His Son when He hung on the cross? Because when Jesus hung on that cross the Bible says, "He became sin for us."

In other words, when Jesus became sin for us (had our sins laid upon Him) He was forsaken by the Father because, according to Habakkuk 1:13, God is so pure and holy He cannot look upon sin (in a favorable way in terms of fellowship).

When Jesus became "sin for us" (took upon Himself the sins of humanity)—the Father could not have fellowship with Him and "looked away."

In other words, the Father forsook the Son at that moment—the first and only time in all of eternity!

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NKJV)

²¹ For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Simply put, God made Christ to be sin for us—Christ who knew no sin—that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

We must beware of any idea that on the cross of Calvary the Lord Jesus Christ actually became *sinful* in Himself—such an idea is false. Our sins were placed *on* Him, but they were not *in* Him. Jesus became our substitute on that cross, the payment for our sins—the innocent dying for the guilty.

Isaiah 53:5–6 (NLT)

⁵ But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. ⁶ All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God’s paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on him the sins of us all.

In these verses we have a prophesy of our Saviors punishment and death on our behalf.

- How He would be beaten for our transgressions and brutalized for our sins.
- How He would be mocked and ridiculed and nailed to a cross so that we might have peace with God and eternal life.

Here we have in these verses the very foundation upon which the gospel is built—we call it the ‘*penal substitutionary atonement*’ of Jesus Christ.

‘*Penal substitution*’ means that Jesus was punished in our place—He was a substitute that took *our* judgment and died on *our* behalf and in so doing He atoned for our sins so that we could be reconciled to God. It is the foundation upon which the gospel is built—without it there is no gospel.

It is the instrument that God used to make penal substitution a reality was—the cross. Is it any wonder then that Satan has been attacking it from the very day Jesus was crucified until today?

This shouldn’t shock us—it’s actually a fulfillment of Bible prophecy—

2 Timothy 3:1–5 (NKJV)

¹ But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: ² For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers...lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ having a form of godliness but denying its power...(what power?)

Romans 1:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

The power of the gospel is the shed blood of Jesus Christ on Calvary’s Cross which alone can atone for our sins—

Roger Oakland in his book, “Faith Undone” had this to say on the subject—

“The heart and core of the Christian faith is based upon Jesus Christ’s shed blood at Calvary as the only

acceptable substitutionary atonement for mankind's sins. The Gospel message requires this foundation. The Bible says the wages of sin is death—thus every person alive should receive the penalty of spiritual death because none of us is without sin, since we are born with our sin nature intact. Satan hates the Gospel message. He understands what the Gospel means, and his agenda is to deceive mankind from understanding and believing so they can suffer eternally with him. While Scripture is very clear about the necessity of Christ's death in order for us to be saved, some believe this would make God a blood-thirsty barbarian. Embedded within the structure of the emerging church is just such a belief."

Some professing Christian leaders and churches say they 'love the cross', they 'respect the cross'—but then go on to deny the power of the cross.

They say that "*Jesus' going to the cross was an example of sacrifice and servanthood that we should follow, but the idea that God would send His Son to a violent death for the sins of mankind—well, that is not who God is. A loving God would never do that! Such a violent act would make Christianity a 'slaughterhouse religion'*"

A '*slaughterhouse religion*'—isn't that exactly what the Christian faith is?

Isaiah 53:7 (NKJV)

⁷ He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth.

1 Peter 1:18-19 (NKJV)

¹⁸ knowing that you were not redeemed [i.e., '*purchased out of the slavery to sin and Satan*'] with corruptible things, *like silver or gold*, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

Sin, all sin, in whatever vile form it takes is an affront to God Who is pure, holy and absolutely righteous! He cannot bear to look upon sin and can have no fellowship with anyone defiled by sin—unless it is atoned for (Old Testament 'kophar'—'*a covering*').

But as one pastor put it—"*You can't cover something as vile as sin with 'taffeta and lace'—it takes blood!*" (Hebrews 9:22)

Which means *something*, or *Someone* has to die.

- In the Old Testament that something was the animal sacrifices that God allowed to temporarily cover the guilt of sin.
- In the New Testament that Someone, was the Lamb of God, our Savior Jesus Christ, whose blood alone could take away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

Psalm 22:3–5 (NKJV)

³ **But You are holy, Enthroned in the praises of Israel.** ⁴ **Our fathers trusted in You; They trusted, and You delivered them.** ⁵ **They cried to You, and were delivered; They trusted in You, and were not ashamed.**

Understand that when you're reading Psalm 22 as a prophecy of David where Jesus is speaking through him—sometimes it bounces back and forth from David to Jesus. In these verses I believe David is speaking. He is going through a severe adversity and has been crying out to God, day and night—but God has been silent.

This has not caused David to question the character of God but simply has him confused as to why God hasn't seen fit to answer his prayer.

One pastor puts his finger on this—

One pastor said,

“But You are holy: The Forsaken One remembered God and His greatness, even when immersed in suffering. He did not curse or blaspheme God, and he knew that his present agony did not change God’s holiness (**You are holy**) or greatness (**Enthroned in the praises of Israel**).

We have the sense that the present crisis filled David (and the greater Son of David) with doubt and confusion, yet he would not allow doubts as to the holiness or greatness of God. Whatever he did *not* know in his present situation, there were some things that he *did* know.”

Too often we let our circumstances influence what we believe about God instead of allowing what we believe about God to influence the way we look at our circumstances.

When you find yourself facing a situation that you don’t understand, a situation that seems contrary to your concept of God—fall back on what you do know, on what you do understand about God—fall back on three truths about Him:

1. That God is Sovereign

This means that not only is God aware of everything that touches my life—He is in absolute control of everything that touches my life.

God’s sovereignty is rooted in the fact that He is almighty, He is all-powerful especially when it comes to the circumstances of my life—that nothing happens in my life except what God allows for His purposes.

Now God’s sovereignty alone wouldn’t comfort me or give me peace (in fact it would terrify me) if I didn’t believe the second of these truths:

2. That God loves me

God loves me with all of His heart, which He proved on Calvary’s Cross.

Romans 5:8 (NKJV)

⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

You see God is sovereign, He is all-powerful—He can do anything He *desires* to do.

But my believing that, in and of itself, wouldn’t bless or comfort me in times of difficulty and heartache if I didn’t also believe that God loves me more than I could ever know—supremely and unconditionally.

That’s why I can really trust Him and have hope that He is working all things in my life for good, even when I can’t see anything good in my circumstances—I believe that by faith in the power, the Person, and the promises of God.

The Bible clearly teaches that God’s sovereignty and His love always work together for my ultimate good. (Romans 8:28)—I have to believe this by faith because my circumstances don’t always show me that this is true.

But listen, even these 2 truths, that God is sovereign (in complete control of every circumstance) and that God is all-loving Who loves me with all of His heart unconditionally—still wouldn't be enough to comfort me in times of great adversity if I didn't believe one more thing about God—

3. That God has infinite wisdom

Look, even if God is all-powerful and all-loving—if He wasn't very wise, He could still lead my life 'over a cliff' by leading me in the wrong path. I mean He meant well, but didn't have the wisdom to lead me in the right path for my life!

It's knowing that God is all-powerful, all-loving and all-wise that solidifies my trust in Him (it's the third leg of my 3-legged 'faith stool.')

This allows me to believe with all confidence that He will lead me in the right path and ultimately to the right place for my life.

Look, God is so much wiser than I am—a truth I accept in principle but not always in practice. There are many things that God allows to happen in my life that I can't understand. I look at the situation and say to myself, "If I were running the show I wouldn't have let that happen, or I wouldn't have done things that way..."

The problem is I can't see the big picture like God does—I only have limited perception of the situation and therefore limited information to work with. But that never seems to stop me from making judgments based on my limited understanding, judgments which cause me to question the wisdom and love of God.

Peter said that the problem with us is that we only see what is near and not what is a far off—in other words we can't see the future, we don't know what is coming down the road tomorrow or next week or next year—but God does!

He is working in my life today for the future—so, I have to trust in the sovereignty, the love and the wisdom of God that together are working for my ultimate good—

Jeremiah 29:11 (NLT)

¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.

Psalm 22:6 (NKJV)

⁶ But I am a worm, and no man; A reproach of men, and despised by the people.

What was Jesus saying when He said, "I am a worm"? The Hebrew word for **worm** is 'tola'at.' The tola'at worm would climb up a tree and attach itself to that tree in preparation for giving birth to its offspring.

It would then swell up and turn a crimson red color. It would stick there for 3 days where it would die and burst open, giving birth to its young as they would literally eat off its flesh to survive—

John 6:53, 55 (NKJV)

⁵³ Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you... ⁵⁵ For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.

It would then turn bright white, fall to the ground leaving a scarlet red stain on that tree—which brings us to Isaiah 1:18—

Isaiah 1:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ “Come now, and let us reason together,” Says the Lord, “Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.

The Jewish people would gather these tola’at shani worms from the trees, crush them mix them with water and use it to dye parts of the priest’s robes, the curtains of the Temple and other things a crimson red.

Isaiah 53:10–12 (NLT)

¹⁰ But it was the Lord’s good plan to crush him and cause him grief. Yet when his life is made an offering for sin, he will have many descendants. He will enjoy a long life, and the Lord’s good plan will prosper in his hands. ¹¹ When he sees all that is accomplished by his anguish, he will be satisfied. And because of his experience, my righteous servant will make it possible for many to be counted righteous, for he will bear all their sins. ¹² I will give him the honors of a victorious soldier, because he exposed himself to death. He was counted among the rebels. He bore the sins of many and interceded for rebels.

Psalm 22:6–8 (NKJV)

⁶ But I *am* a worm, and no man; A reproach of men, and despised by the people. ⁷ **All those who see Me ridicule Me; They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,** ⁸ **“He trusted in the Lord, let Him rescue Him; Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!”**

Matthew 27:39–44 (NKJV)

³⁹ And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads ⁴⁰ and saying, “You who destroy the temple and build *it* in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.” ⁴¹ Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, ⁴² “He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. ⁴³ He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’ ” ⁴⁴ Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing.

If Jesus had listened to these mockers and saved Himself by coming down from the cross—He wouldn’t have been able to save us!

It was love that nailed Jesus to the cross not the Romans—
He said, *“No takes My life from Me
I give it freely for the sheep.”*
—John 10:18

Satan is still trying to get Christians to—*“come down from the cross.”*

But Jesus said no one can be His disciple who doesn’t die to self, take up their cross and follow Him.

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower— please, reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

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