

32. The Book of Psalms 22:9-31

The Good Shepherd-Part 2

a message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier
(5/3/26)

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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!

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.

Let me start by saying that I am very concerned about the state of the church in America.

Paul warned us that in the last days many in the church would no longer want to hear sound doctrine and would gravitate to churches and gather to themselves teachers who would tell them what they wanted to hear. It seems that today what people want to hear are upbeat messages that speak to felt needs and which downplay (or neglect altogether) the message of the cross.

Today, many churches and pastors believe that the preaching of the cross is offensive and a stumbling block to unbelievers and so in an effort to accommodate the worldly and promote a positive, seeker friendly environment—the preaching of the cross is being deleted from many church services.

One new pastor told his worship leader, who had chosen a song for worship that Sunday that dealt with the blood of Christ shed on the cross, that, *"If he ever played songs like that again he would fire him—we're going to keep things positive around here!"*

If preaching the cross makes me negative, then I'm in good company because that's something Paul taught all the time—

1 Corinthians 1:23–24 (NKJV)

²³ but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, ²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

1 Corinthians 2:1–2 (NKJV)

¹ And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. ² For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

1 Corinthians 1:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

The power of God to save us from our sins is the blood of Jesus shed for us on Calvary's Cross—
"For without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness." (Hebrews 9:22b)

Without the preaching of the cross no one can be saved—as someone has said, "A cross-less Christianity is a Christ-less Christianity and a Christ-less Christianity can't save anyone."

As we said last time, Psalm 22 isn't exclusively about the crucifixion—the first 21 verses of the psalm deals with the *crucifixion* of Christ while verses 22-31 deal with the *resurrection* and *post-resurrection* ministry of Christ.

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

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

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

On to the first part of this Psalm—

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

Psalm 22:1–8 (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. 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. 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! Jesus was forsaken on the cross so that you and I never would be—"*I will never leave you nor forsake you.*" (Hebrews 13:5)

Some of you might be thinking—"So then why do I feel forsaken?"—because your feelings are liars (Jer 17:9) rooted in the condemnation of the devil. (Elaborate)

Psalm 22:9–10 (NKJV)

⁹ But You *are* He who took Me out of the womb; You made Me trust *while* on My mother's breasts. ¹⁰ I was cast upon You from birth. From My mother's womb You *have been* My God.

Theologians have debated for centuries as to when they believe Jesus first became conscious of His divinity as a child.

Does His language in verse 10 indicate He was aware of it while He was still in His mother Mary's womb?

"I was cast upon You from birth"

We know that Jesus had a special birth—He was virgin born! The very first mention of Jesus' birth in Scripture, was all the way back in Genesis 3:15 when God promised that He would send a Savior, a Redeemer—through the 'seed of the woman.'

Every first semester biology student knows that the woman doesn't have the seed, she carries the egg which the seed fertilizes—the seed comes from the man.

For centuries, theologians have seen this as a reference to the virgin-birth which is why they have called Genesis 3:15 the *proto-evangelium*—which is Latin for: "*The first announcement of the Gospel*".

Why did the Savior have to be virgin born?

Psalm 22:11–12 (NKJV)

¹¹ Be not far from Me, For trouble is near; For there is none to help. ¹² Many bulls have surrounded Me; Strong bulls of Bashan have encircled Me.

The "bulls of Bashan" is a reference to demonic entities that were worshipped by the Canaanites.

Therefore, I believe that, as He hung on the Cross, Jesus was not only surrounded by people who mocked Him—but also by demons who jeered and taunted Him as well.

Psalm 22:13 (NKJV)

¹³ They gape at Me with their mouths, Like a raging and roaring lion.

One pastor said this—

"How little we understand of what took place on the Cross. Could it be that if your worship is dry right now, it's because you haven't taken a trip to Calvary and remembered what Jesus did for you? He purchased your salvation, even with the bulls of Bashan cursing and taunting. And even the devil himself who Peter said comes at us 'like a roaring lion'".

Now starting with verse 14 we get a look at what a person being crucified goes through, what they're feeling and in Jesus' case what He was seeing as He looked down from the cross—

Psalm 22:14–15 (NKJV)

¹⁴ I am poured out like water, And all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It has melted within Me. ¹⁵ My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death.

Historians tell us that those being crucified sweat profusely—as if melting. That led to extreme dehydration and a raging thirst which caused their tongue to cling to the inside of their mouth thus hindering their ability to speak.

This is why when Jesus said, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" ("*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*") those standing there thought He was calling for *Elijah* to come and help Him.

Jesus wasn't calling for Elijah, but His tongue was so swollen and stuck to the inside of His mouth—that those standing there couldn't understand Him.

It was then He said, **"I thirst"**—

John 19:29–30 (NKJV)

²⁹ Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put *it* on hyssop, and put *it* to His mouth. ³⁰ So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.

That sour wine moistened His mouth enough for Him to cry out clearly so that everyone there that day would hear and understand His cry of victory—**"It is finished!"**

Psalm 22:16–17 (NKJV)

¹⁶ **For dogs have surrounded Me; The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet;** ¹⁷ **I can count all My bones. They look *and* stare at Me.**

"For dogs have surrounded Me; The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me."

This is a reference to the Roman soldiers (Gentiles) that were standing at the cross while Jesus was being crucified—the Jews referred to Gentiles as '*dogs*.'

"They [the Romans] pierced My hands and My feet..." (verse 17a)

This is a remarkable prophecy—especially when you realize that it was spoken by Jesus (through David) a thousand years before His crucifixion! In fact, this psalm describes more vividly and graphically than the New Testament the pain of crucifixion—500 years before crucifixion was invented by the Persians and roughly 900 years before the Romans began to use it as a form of execution.

When the Romans crucified a man, they would **pierce** his hands and feet by nailing them to the cross.

When David wrote this psalm the Jews would not have understood this statement because—the Jews executed people through stoning not by crucifixion (which had not yet been invented).

"I can count all My bones. They look *and* stare at Me." (verse 17b)

When a person was crucified, their body would slump down causing their bones to slip out of joint and the bones of their rib cage to become highly visible causing people to stare in horror (which is why Rome crucified people along main roads to strike fear in onlookers so as to not go against Rome!)

The next statement is especially remarkable, prophetically speaking, seeing it is so specific—

Psalm 22:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ **They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots.**

John 19:23–24 (NKJV)

²³ Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and also the tunic. Now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top in one piece. ²⁴ They said

therefore among themselves, “Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be,” that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says: “*They divided My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots*” [a reference to Psalm 22:18]. Therefore the soldiers did these things.

Psalm 22:19–21 (NKJV)

¹⁹ But You, O Lord, do not be far from Me; O My Strength, hasten to help Me! ²⁰ Deliver Me from the sword, My precious *life* from the power of the dog. ²¹ Save Me from the lion’s mouth And from the horns of the wild oxen! You have answered Me.

That last statement divides the first part of the psalm from the second part. As we just pointed out, the whole psalm isn’t about the crucifixion. The first 21 verses of the psalm speak of the *crucifixion* of Christ while verses 22-31 deal with the *resurrection* and *post-resurrection* ministry of Jesus.

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

We can see that starting in verse 22 the whole tone of the Psalm changes from pain to praise!—

Psalm 22:22–30 (NKJV)

²² I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will praise You. ²³ You who fear the Lord, praise Him! All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him, And fear Him, all you offspring of Israel! ²⁴ For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; Nor has He hidden His face from Him; But when He cried to Him, He heard. ²⁵ My praise *shall be* of You in the great assembly; I will pay My vows before those who fear Him. ²⁶ The poor shall eat and be satisfied; Those who seek Him will praise the Lord. Let your heart live forever! ²⁷ All the ends of the world Shall remember and turn to the Lord, And all the families of the nations Shall worship before You. ²⁸ For the kingdom *is* the Lord’s, And He rules over the nations [talking about the Millennial Kingdom]. ²⁹ All the prosperous of the earth Shall eat and worship; All those who go down to the dust Shall bow before Him, Even he who cannot keep himself alive. ³⁰ A posterity shall serve Him. It will be recounted of the Lord to the *next* generation,

The writer of Hebrews quotes Psalm 22:22 in Hebrews 2:12—but then the writer goes on to make this statement:

Hebrews 2:14–15 (NLT)

¹⁴ Because God’s children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death. ¹⁵ Only in this way could he set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying.

The cross was God’s way of telling us that sometimes He will allow pain to bring about the greater good (James 1:2-4).

“But I still don’t understand how a God of love could or would allow pain and suffering in the world He created.”

We must realize that this is not the world God originally created for us to live in—it was our sin that turned paradise into pain. But since sin has brought pain and suffering into the world—God is not against using it to bring about the greater good.

It’s important that we understand that not all pain is bad—in fact it can be a blessing in the long run. For example, every athlete goes through incredible pain and suffering in training. Why?—for the joy of victory!

If victory wasn't greater than the suffering it takes to get there—no one would ever endure it! So, every athlete endures the pain to bring about the greater good! But furthermore, for the people who can't understand why, even if man messed up this world through sin—why God doesn't just 'fix it' and make it problem free again.

They are harboring under a faulty assumption—that the absence of all suffering would be the greatest good for mankind. Or to put it another way, they feel a God of love would never or could never use suffering or pain for our good.

But is it possible that God could use suffering and tragedy to bring us to Himself—or to help us grow as believers by drawing us to Him in a way that nothing else would? The ultimate example of this truth was demonstrated by God through the cross.

The cross was God's way of demonstrating how the very worst thing that has ever happened in the history of the world ended up resulting in the very best thing that has ever happened in the history of the world—the crucifixion of Jesus Christ which allowed for us to be saved.

Don't forget that the God who said, *"The soul that sins shall surely die"*—is also the same God who said, *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him would not perish but have everlasting life."*

When it comes to suffering on account of sin—God took His own medicine by becoming one of us in the Person of Jesus Christ, allowing Himself to be crucified by those He came to save and suffered on that cross more than any of us would ever suffer—even if we lived a million life times!

One author said,

"How could you not love this Being Who went the extra mile, Who practiced more than He preached. Who entered into our world, Who suffered our pains, Who offers Himself to us in the midst of our sorrows? What more could He do?"

John Stott—

"I could never myself believe in God, if it were not for the cross...In the real world of pain, how could one worship a God who was immune to it? I have entered many Buddhist temples in different Asian countries and stood respectfully before the statue of Buddha, his legs crossed, arms folded, eyes closed, the ghost of a smile playing round his mouth, a remote look on his face, detached from the agonies of the world. But each time after a while I have had to turn away. And in imagination I have turned instead to that lonely, twisted, tortured figure on the cross, nails through hands and feet, back lacerated, limbs wrenched, brow bleeding from thorn-pricks, mouth dry and intolerably thirsty, plunged in God-forsaken darkness. That is the God for me! He laid aside his immunity to pain. He entered our world of flesh and blood, tears and death. He suffered for us. Our sufferings become more manageable in light of His..."

Psalm 22:31 (NKJV)

³¹ They will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born, That He has done *this*.

That last phrase in the Hebrew could be translated—**"It is finished."**

When Jesus said from the cross, **"It is finished!"** He was saying—*"I have completed the work My Father gave Me to do—it is done!"* And what was that work?—

Luke 19:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

John 12:32–33 (NKJV)

³² And I, if I am lifted up from the earth [on the cross], will draw all *peoples* to Myself.” ³³ This He said, signifying by what death He would die.

The statement by Jesus from the cross **“It is finished”** should evoke praise in every one of our hearts—no matter how much pain we suffer in life or what tragedy comes our way.

Because we have waiting for us a life in heaven where God promised that someday He would—

“Wipe every tear from our eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things will be gone forever.” (Revelation 21:4)

Let me close with a true story as told by one author—

“Horatio G. Spafford was a successful lawyer and businessman in Chicago with a lovely family — a wife, Anna, and five children. However, they were not strangers to tears and tragedy. Their young son died with pneumonia in 1871, and in that same year, much of their business was lost in the great Chicago fire. Yet, God in His mercy and kindness allowed the business to flourish once more.

On Nov. 21, 1873, the French ocean liner, Ville du Havre was crossing the Atlantic from the U.S. to Europe with 313 passengers on board. Among the passengers were Mrs. Spafford and their four daughters. Although Mr. Spafford had planned to go with his family, he found it necessary to stay in Chicago to help solve an unexpected business problem. He told his wife he would join her and their children in Europe a few days later. His plan was to take another ship.

About four days into the crossing of the Atlantic, the Ville du Havre collided with a powerful, iron-hulled Scottish ship, the Loch Earn. Suddenly, all of those on board were in grave danger. Anna hurriedly brought her four children to the deck. She knelt there with Annie, Margaret Lee, Bessie and Tanetta and prayed that God would spare them if that could be His will, or to make them willing to endure whatever awaited them. Within approximately 12 minutes, the Ville du Havre slipped beneath the dark waters of the Atlantic, carrying with it 226 of the passengers including the four Spafford children.

A sailor, rowing a small boat over the spot where the ship went down, spotted a woman floating on a piece of the wreckage. It was Anna, still alive. He pulled her into the boat, and they were picked up by another large vessel which, nine days later, landed them in Cardiff, Wales.

From there she wired her husband a message which began, *“Saved alone, what shall I do?”* Mr. Spafford later framed the telegram and placed it in his office. Another of the ship’s survivors, Pastor Weiss, later recalled Anna saying, *“God gave me four daughters. Now they have been taken from me. Someday I will understand why.”*

Mr. Spafford booked passage on the next available ship and left to join his grieving wife. With the ship about four days out, the captain called Spafford to his cabin and told him they were over the place where his children went down. According to Bertha Spafford Vester, a daughter born after the tragedy, Spafford wrote what has come to be a well-known and much beloved hymn, *“It Is Well with My Soul”*:

“When peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll,

Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say, ‘It is well, it is well with my soul.’

Chorus:

It is well with my soul, It is well, it is well with my soul.”

That is the proper response to our suffering and pain that we experience in our lives as Christians.

John 16:33 (NLT)

³³ I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.”

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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