

Psalm 22

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 27 July 2014

Preacher: Daniel Gilman

[0 : 00] Father God, we thank you for your goodness. Father, we thank you for your faithfulness. Father, we slowly do learn to trust you, Father. Father, we thank you for all that you do for us and all that you are.

Father, we thank you that we can learn who you are. Father, we're thankful. Amen. Amen. When I was young, I was a pastor's kid.

It didn't mean much to me at the time. I mean, nothing when you're a kid really means that much to you. What it meant for me was that I got shepherded all over the place all the time. You know, my parents had places to go, things to do.

Because my dad was a pastor, he was at every event possible. I mean, from the beginning to the end, every event. And so we were shepherded, event to event to event. And sometimes that was a great thing.

Like when we got to go to baptisms. We didn't have a fancy baptismal tank or a font or anything like that. It was a bit like this. We had to make do. But since we were in a tropical country, we could improvise.

[1 : 13] We could go to beaches. We didn't know anybody with pools, so we had to really improvise. We could go to beaches, but more often than not, we would go scouting for rivers, which were usually closer to where we were.

One of my favorite places to go ever was this river. It was running down a mountainside. And every few feet of drop, there would be another big pool.

Just a big rocky pool, sort of 30 feet across. And it would just be pool after pool after pool after pool. And so you would just, if you weren't going there to baptize somebody, you would just go and you would look around and you'd find the best pool and the best place to have your picnic, because of course there's always a picnic.

And you would set up. And we would always have a great time, because as soon as the baptizing was done, as soon as the picnic was done, then my mom and dad would say, all right, see you later. And we would go and explore whatever pools there were.

We would make dams. We would go running up and down the hill. And it was always a really great thing. But more often than baptisms, my dad being a pastor meant that we were at every single weekly service.

[2 : 15] For better or worse, we were almost there from the beginning into the end every time. The first people to arrive, the last people to leave. Our church started sort of just after lunch, early afternoon.

So when everything had ended, my brothers and I were always just clamoring to get home so we could snatch that last bit of sunshine before we had to go in for dinner.

But no, we were always there early for Sunday school, just waiting for kids to show up, trying not to look bored, because, I mean, mom always gives you chores when you look bored, right?

And then we were always there late as well. Again, trying not to look bored, because there's always chores. And if there were no chores, we would throw paper airplanes into the ceiling fans, which, if you're a kid, no, they're all gone now.

I can say it. It's a great way to get your parents so annoyed they'll take you home, throw a ceiling fan, throw paper airplanes in the ceiling fan. But more often than not, there were always chores, so we would have to go hide in the building somewhere and pretend to be whatever characters we were reading about or seeing on the flannel graph that day in Sunday school.

[3 : 21] For me, David was always one of those characters that stood out. For a kid, he was maybe about as close to a pirate as he got in the Bible.

You know, he killed giants, he won wars, all his friends were mighty men of valor. I mean, he was a king. It was pretty awesome. So you had all those elements covered if you were going to play King David, which was awesome.

And yet, somehow he was still a man after God's heart, which, as a little Christian boy in church, was also awesome. So when we were old enough to actually read the Bible for ourselves, my brothers and I started noticing something about David.

And that is that he was not just a man after God's own heart, but he was also bloody, adulterous, and just a broken, hard man.

But, I mean, God tells David he can't build the temple because he's shed so much blood. I mean, it's a big thing. You know, he killed 200 men for his first wife, and for his last wife he had his best friend killed, or one of his best friends killed.

[4 : 29] So how is it that we reconcile these two characteristics, man after God's own heart, and bloody man too bloody to build the temple? David's Psalms, I think, like Psalm 22, which was read just a couple of minutes ago, gives us a good idea of how it might be.

Like Brian mentioned last week, it's all about the character of God. David clung to God through a very long period of time and learned who he is.

He learned what God is like, how he responds to his people. David spent years watching God work through his life for his own purposes, and a psalm like Psalm 22 comes out of that process.

So, what in David's life would allow him to be both a man after God's own heart and too bloody to build the temple?

Like I said, I'm sure there isn't just one answer, but we can find at least one answer here. So, let's take the psalm apart a little bit, shake it around, see what pops out. In the first reading, you may have felt a shift halfway through the psalm.

[5 : 41] That second part of the psalm is one long hymn of praise for who God is and what he will do. But that first part of the psalm is all observations that David's making.

And he alternates between observations of his own situation and observations of what God is doing and who God is. So, if you have your Bible, open it up to Psalm 22.

If you're missing your Bible, there's a couple up here that you can use for today, and if you don't have one at home, just take it home with you. So, Psalm 22, verse 1. So, this is David looking at his own situation.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me from the words of my groanings? Oh, my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer.

And by night, but I find no rest. Now switching to God. Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. In you our fathers trusted.

[6 : 46] They trusted, and you delivered them. To you they cried and were rescued. In you they trusted, and were not put to shame. Back to observation of David.

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. We trust in the Lord. Let him deliver him. Let him rescue him, for he delights in him. Yet you, God, are he who took me from the womb.

You made me trust in you at my mother's breast. On you was I cast from my birth, and from my mother's womb you have been my God. Be not far from me, for trouble is near, and there is none to help me.

Many bulls encompass me, strong bulls of Bashan surround me. They open wide their mouths at me, like ravens and roaring lions. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint.

[7 : 47] My heart is like wax. It is melted within my breast. My strength is dried up like pot shards, and my tongue sticks to my jaws. You lay me in the dust of the earth.

For dogs encompass me. A company of evildoers circles me. They have pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones. They stare and gloat over me.

They divide my garments among them, and from my clothing they cast lots. Now observation of God again. But you, O Lord, do not be far off. O you, my help, come quickly to my aid.

Deliver my soul from the sword, 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.

And on David goes into a song of praise. So, he starts off saying, I'm forsaken, but my father's trusted.

[8 : 45] But I'm not like them. I'm like a worm. I'm not even worth anything. But then again, God was with him from the very start. But today he's surrounded. They're even stripping him of his clothes before he's dead.

And then God arrives and victorious. So, David is clearly wrestling with himself and with God throughout this entire passage. David feels small in the face of his, in his troubles, the people tormenting him.

He feels like he's surrounded by enemies and abandoned by God. David is so overwhelmed by the people he's referring to, they're already counting him dead. Now, I've been lucky enough to avoid situations like this in my life.

like the one that David is describing. I've never been counted dead. I don't think I've ever been so hated that I would say that mankind hates me.

But it's hard not to relate on some level to what David is saying. You know, I think I've definitely felt at various times in my life that at least all the people around me seem to dislike me, even if the entire mankind doesn't hate me.

[9 : 54] And certainly I've had sleepless nights. I mean, this is a fairly common thing. Like David is talking about, sleepless nights. I mean, I'm a night person.

My body will stay up as long as I'll push it. I mean, it's the opposite. I can't get up in the morning in the same way, but I can stay up as long as I want. I can always fall asleep in the morning, but I'll always stay up at night.

I'm also a worrier. So it almost doesn't matter what it is, whether it's a conversation I'm supposed to have the next day, or an exam, or a presentation to do, or some other public speaking event.

I don't know. It makes me nervous. But it almost doesn't matter. For me, I'll just toss it back and forth in my head for a couple hours at a time. Now, at my best times, I will specifically bring whatever it is that's bothering me to God.

I'll say, God, there's this big thing in my life, whatever it is. What are you going to do about it?

Please talk to me. Now, I'm not one of these people. I know plenty of them, but I'm not one of these people who hears really specifically in my times of need, usually.

[11 : 02] I'm not a great listener yet. And it sounds as though David, in whatever he's going through, is in that same position. He's not hearing God. And here's where David shows that he knows something of the character of God.

As David recites all the articles of his desperation, I'm poured out like water. The dogs encompass me. I'm despised by people. He starts to recite evidence that God is also faithful.

It's like he's saying, well, I don't see God in this situation. But then again, God was with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob when they needed him. He's saying something like, well, I'm completely despised by the people around me.

But on the other hand, I've seen God in my life from the very, very start. David's faith in God is based on his knowledge of God.

And in turn, his knowledge of God is based on his experience with God. Which is, of course, built on the faith that he's placed in God in the first place, like one big cycle. When Christians describe themselves, they often use these same words.

[12 : 14] They say, maybe you say this all the time too, I have a personal relationship in Jesus. Or, I put my faith in God. And these two ideas are deeply entwined.

We learn about God, we learn who God is through life with him. And in turn, we trust him more. And we learn that God is faithful by trusting him in hard situations.

We learn that God is good by trusting him to be good to us. We learn that God is merciful by repenting and being forgiven. Now, in David's case, his faith is based on knowing that God is faithful.

If you read the books of 1 and 2 Samuel, you'll see plenty of situations where David has a hard situation, he trusts in God, and when he trusts in God, God comes through for him.

David learns this very hands-on way that God is faithful. Late in David's life, David decides to take a census. And he decides to take a census specifically to find out how many fighting men there are in Israel.

[13 : 24] And I'm not really sure what laws he was breaking, but absolutely everybody around him, including his very hard commander of his army, said, look, David, this is a bad idea. This is not going to go well for you.

And he does it anyway. So David knew on some level that he was sinning. And yet somehow, he decides to do it. So he takes the census, and God sends him his prophet.

And I'll read very briefly from 2 Samuel 24. You don't need to turn there. I've got it open already. But David's heart struck him after he had numbered the people.

And David said to the Lord, I have sinned greatly in what I have done. But now, O Lord, please take away the iniquity of your servant, for I have done very foolishly. And when David arose in the morning, the word of the Lord came to the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying, Go and say to David, Thus says the Lord, Three things I offer you.

Choose one of them, that I may do it to you. So Gad came to David and told him and said to him, Shall three years of famine come to you and your land? Or will you flee three months before the foes while they pursue you?

[14:31] Or shall there be three days of pestilence in your land? Not a good scenario. Now consider and decide what answer I shall give to him who sent me. And David said to Gad, and here it is, I am in great distress.

Let us fall into the hand of the Lord. For his mercy is great, but let me not fall into the hand of man. David knew that even when he sinned, he could trust the Lord, who had always been good and merciful and faithful, to continue being good and merciful and faithful.

Even when God was angry, even when God was punishing sin, David trusted that God would be who he is. God would continue to show mercy. God would continue to show mercy to the repentant. In the case of David taking the census, God cuts short the punishment. And as far as we can tell from the text, it's exactly because David was repentant. All through his life, David came to God immediately and repented.

And this forms rather a vivid example of why David might be a man after God's heart. Because it wasn't because he didn't sin, because clearly he did. David was a man after God's heart because he knew who God is.

[15:45] and because he learned who God is. Not to trust in God, just in the knowledge of God, excuse me. Not just to trust in the knowledge of God, but trust in knowledge of who he is gained through experience.

Now I'll admit something to you. Up until now, what I've told you is very simple. It's very ideal, maybe.

And maybe at its worst, what I've said is a little bit glib. Because when you start your Christian journey, you say you have just a little bit of faith and you put it in Jesus and he rewards that faith. He forgives you. Fantastic gift of God. And as life goes on, you learn to trust him more. And as you trust him more and put your trust in him, he continues to be there for you.

And you continue to gain more trust and the cycle goes on until presumably you're a super Christian and everything is good. Same thing with mercy.

[16:44] You learn to repent and as you repent, you learn that God forgives and eventually repentance will become second nature to you. Now the problem that I kept coming back to as I read this chapter over and over again this week was that, and maybe I'm a little bit jaded, I don't know, but as I read this chapter over and over again, I keep thinking to myself that I have learned over life, that even a short life, that the more you trust someone, the more likely you are to get seriously hurt.

And sometimes, I'll face it, I'll tell you right now, I feel that way with God too, that as if I trust God more, there's more room for disappointment. When I was young, I deeply trusted my parents to shepherd me from event to event.

And I trusted them to do it safely. But eventually, people always learn that their parents can't be completely trusted with everything. Some people learn it long before they even have solid memories of their parents.

One of the times that we were at this tropical paradise river with all the, you know, all the terraced pools, we had finished whatever we were doing that day, and my brother and his friend decided to run up the path a little ways to one of the higher pools, the pools that were further up.

And as they were coming back, they were relayed by a couple of guys at knife point. And for five or ten minutes, they held my brother and his friend there and discussed what to do with them.

[18:23] And just before they decided to rape and probably worse, my brother and his friend, they said, we should probably get going. So they took their watches and whatever else they had and ran.

My parents were not there. Numerous times I've learned that I can't trust my parents for everything. Now you probably noticed too that this psalm is familiar somehow.

You may have heard some of these words before if you didn't know exactly where you've heard them at another time. As well as being a psalm of David, Psalm 22 is also an uncanny prophecy of Jesus' death on the cross.

And frankly, if we're talking about what trust in God looks like, Jesus is not the first example I want to jump to. Psalm 22 is not the first place that I want to look.

And the reason that I don't want to jump straight to Jesus is because Jesus trusted in God and he died. So David trusted in God and lived a long life.

[19 : 26] He trusted over and over again and was rewarded over and over again. Jesus was the very heart of God in human flesh, not just after the heart of God.

And he died an early and violent death. So how do we reconcile this? A man after God's own heart lives a long life and the very son of God lives a short violent life, dies a short violent death.

And what it looks like to me is two men trusting God. One lives, one dies. Two men trusting God, one is saved and one is lost.

And if maybe that sounds a little bit fishy to you, it's because it is. Because there's more to it than that, isn't there? Jesus' death meant something. Jesus' death had a deeper purpose.

So let's take a quick look at what the two of them said during their lifetimes, Jesus and David. So here's what David said. This is what we just read. Psalm 22, verse 3.

[20 : 31] Yet you, God, are holy and throned on the praises of Israel. Right? And here is what Jesus said. This is Matthew 26. Again, I have it open already.

I'll read it for you. Matthew 26, verse 39. And going a little further into the garden of Gethsemane, he fell on his face and prayed, saying, My father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me.

Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will. And again, a second time, he went away and prayed, My father, if this cannot pass from me unless I drink it, your will be done.

Both Jesus and David knew God's character. They both recognized who God is. They both knew what he was like. They recognized that God is not only faithful, that God is not only merciful, but God is also sovereign.

Part of what that means is that God is for his own glory. He's not for our comfort. He's not for our safety. He is for his own glory. He forgives and he saves us for his own glory.

[21 : 44] We live for his glory. We live so that he will be praised, not so that we will be praised. The entire second half of the Psalm 22 that we read earlier is all about praising God for his glory.

Now, God's sovereignty puts an entirely different spin, a different light on the question that we had earlier. What it means to be a man after God's own heart is no longer just about putting faith in a faithful God in hard situations, although, of course, we need to bring our trouble to God in very specific prayers sometimes.

Do you need a car to get to work? We should pray for that and expect God to do something. Are you being pestered at work, mocked for your faith, perhaps worse than pestered?

We need to pray about that. God responds. But it's no longer just about trusting in the mercy of God and the goodness of God.

It's also about recognizing the kingship of God, which both David and Jesus did. It's about recognizing the kingship of God to the point that his glory becomes as important to us as it is to him.

[23 : 00] It's about trusting God's faithfulness to the point that we can not only say, God, I need your help and expect him to be there, but getting to the point that our faithfulness also says, not my will, but your will be done.

Now, these words are hard to say and I recognize that, your will be done, not mine, but whatever faith you came in with this morning, that's where we start. Probably most of us aren't at the place where we can say, not my will, but your will be done in every situation.

But here's a question, can you trust him for food this week? Can you trust him for a job for the rest of the month? Can you trust him to forgive you for being snappy with your neighbor or your roommate or your wife or husband this morning?

That's where we begin. That's how we get to know God, by trusting him in his faithfulness for the things in daily life, for trusting him for forgiveness for small things.

Eventually, the larger things come, and ultimately trusting him in his sovereignty, that his faithfulness will be ultimately for his glory.

[24 : 22] Now, if you came this morning and you're thinking, well, I don't think I have enough faith to say, not your will be done, but my, not my will, but your will be done, you can start.

You can start with what you came. If that means that you have enough to say, okay, Jesus, I have enough faith in God to start a relationship, to start putting my trust in you, that's enough.

So let's pray. Father God, we thank you that you are faithful. We thank you that you are merciful.

And Father, we thank you that in whatever capacity we have faith at this moment, we can trust you.

And Father, we can trust that we are not the center of the universe and that you are. We can trust that you are sovereign and that we don't have to worry about it. Father God, we would like to start today putting our trust in you.

Father, with whatever we have, we have to start putting our trust in you. And Father, we thank you that you sent Jesus to make a way to do that. That we can trust you for forgiveness.

[25 : 44] Father, we thank you. And we thank you for Jesus. And in his name, amen.