

The Cry and The Cup

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[0 : 00] Verse 21, verse 13 begins saying, But as for me, my prayer is to you, O Lord, at an acceptable time, O God, in the abundance of your steadfast love.

Answer me in your saving faithfulness. And so on. As I said earlier, this is our third time looking at this psalm, third of four.

So the next one will come to a conclusion. And as we've seen going through this psalm, David is obviously in great distress and great turmoil in his situation.

He's surrounded by enemies in so many different ways. And there's mocking going on. He's suffering. He feels overwhelmed and sinking in the midst of it all. We've seen that he came with a cry of trouble.

The psalm opens with these words, Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck. There's obviously just something major going on around him. He has a confession himself.

[1 : 06] He's looking not at just others around him. He's looking within himself and looking and seeing the faults within his own heart. But he's crying out in the midst of that, Don't let me be a stumbling block in any way to those who are your people or those who would become your people, that my witness would not fail.

And then the last time we were looking at this psalm, we saw how his focus is towards God. He remembers who he's praying to. He recognizes the reproach, the unjust suffering he is going through.

It's all because, as we saw, for his zeal for God. He's not turning his back on God. He's not allowing, although he feels overwhelmed, he's not allowing the people to defeat him in any way.

His focus is always towards God. He is close to God. That's a great reminder to ourselves that we need to be close to God ourselves at all times.

Because when we feel these times of being overwhelmed, if we have been distant from God in the good times, how are we going to be able to draw near to God when the going gets tough, as it were?

[2 : 26] So we are to be faithful and close to God at all times. As I mentioned as well, this psalm, it's not just a psalm about David.

It's not just a psalm about his suffering. It's a psalm that points us forward to the New Testament and always pointing us to the Lord Jesus Christ and his suffering.

And it's something we want to further reflect on this evening, the suffering of Jesus in the midst of the suffering of David as well.

And especially as we think of approaching a communion weekend in just over a week, we want to always be preparing our hearts as we come to worship God.

But especially at a time of communion when we are focused on the death of Christ, the cross of Christ. We are always focused on that.

[3 : 24] But when we take communion, we are remembering his death in that particular way as we take the bread and take the wine. This psalm is a prayer, a prayer that David is offering up.

And although we would always love to have nicely polished prayers and eloquent prayers where everything just flows from us, we know so often that that is not the case.

We know so often we can come even as David is coming here, just where everything seems to be just overwhelming him. As we saw before, there's almost like there's not much structure in this psalm.

He's just jumping from one thing to another. And yet as you go through this psalm, especially as we come to the last part of it, you see that as he's coming near, although he seems disorganized in the start, there is always this just coming in towards God.

God calming him. God reassuring him. God comforting him. And eventually, as we'll see, he comes praising God. And that's really what prayer does.

[4 : 34] Even when we feel distracted, even when we think we're disorganized so much, prayer can calm us as we come close to God. So we come to that point where we praise him, that he is with us and that he hears our prayer.

And especially so as we come just to look at Christ, to gaze on the beauty of Christ, to see the cross of Christ in all the reality, in all the horror.

And yet there he died for sinners, that we might have life and have peace through him. So we continue to see the situation of David here.

And just as we come into verse 13, verse 12 just reminds us of the situation he was in. I am the talk of those who sit in the gate and the drunkards make songs about me.

The gate was a place where so many of the people met. It was like a council chamber almost. The important people would gather there and they would talk about all the different things that were going on.

[5 : 43] So they were all talking about David, the important people. But also, it says the drunkards, even the drunkards are making songs about me. He was the talk of the town, ridiculed in so many ways.

But look at what it says in verse 13. But as for me, my prayer is to you, O Lord. And so there's two things we want to see this evening.

First of all, we're going to see, again, just the cry of David. The cry and then the cup. The cry and the cup.

His cry, but also his portion at this time. And we'll see just how that ties in with our Lord Jesus. His cry and the cup he had to bear for us.

When you read through verse 13 down to verse 18, you see there David's prayer just pouring his heart out to God.

[6 : 45] And it seems in some ways to start in a calm kind of way initially. Yes, that there's much trouble. He's crying out to my prayer to be heard, O Lord.

But he says, at an acceptable time. It's almost like, I don't want to trouble you just now, God, but at an acceptable time, O God, in the abundance of your steadfast love, answer me in your saving faithfulness. He seems quite composed. But then, the further down you go, verse 16, he's saying, answer me, Lord, O Lord, for your steadfast love is good.

So again, maybe just a little bit more haste here, but he's still focused on the love of God. God. But then, you see, in verse 17, the end of verse 17, he's saying, hide not your face from your servant, for I am in distress.

Make haste to answer me. So it's almost like he's just going through this, in your own time, God, answer me, and then make haste and answer me.

[8 : 01] What's keeping you? But he's not losing hope in it. And what we find is that he is still specific in prayer and focusing on prayer and again, it's just different ways that we can pray ourselves.

We pray the Lord's prayer each Sunday and we pray the Lord's will be done. There's a sense of patience in that prayer.

your will be done. We'll wait on your will. But that doesn't mean that there isn't occasions when we plead with God, when we come with a sense of urgency to God, when we need almost an answer immediately.

We see it throughout the Psalms and in other prayers in the scriptures. The psalmist says in other places, make haste, come quickly. All of these kind of prayers are offered up to God where the sense is, we need you now.

We almost don't have time to wait. We need you now. And so it's a reminder to us that we can pray in this way as well.

[9 : 17] Specific prayers to God. God. And it doesn't mean that he'll give us exactly what we're asking for every time.

But we plead with him for an answer. And that he'll give what we need. And this is an example, as we see as you go through this Psalm, where David perhaps isn't, his prayer isn't answered just as he wants it.

because you see, he's not removed from the situation of his enemies being around him and slandering him. But what we see as we go on is he comes to a point where he's able to praise God.

God gives him what he needs for this occasion. Not to remove the situation, but to calm him in it. And so it's okay for us to plead earnestly to God.

If you look at the New Testament and instructions and prayer in the New Testament, you notice Jesus teaches a parable. A parable in Luke 18 and verse 1 where it says, and he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.

[10:37] And he uses the example of a widow who keeps bothering a master. And in verse 5 it says, yet because this widow kept bothering me, I will give her justice so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.

Jesus is there talking about prayer. That if we almost keep pleading to God in prayer, we don't lose heart in prayer that yes, he relents and answers our prayer.

And this is based on who God is. And that's how David is coming to God in prayer at all times. He's not losing hope, he's not losing faith in God.

You see it in verse 16, answer me O Lord for your steadfast love is good. According to your abundant mercy, turn to me.

He knows who he's praying to. He knows God is a God of steadfast love, an unchanging love. And he's a God of mercy, abundant mercy.

[11:42] So he knows God can give. And so he keeps coming to him in this way. Never do you see him coming and say, well, I'll do it myself, Lord. You're not doing it in my time or my way.

I'll just have to do it myself. Even when he's asking, come in haste, make haste to answer me, he's saying, hide not your face from your servant.

He's not saying, I'm going to do it myself. He's always saying, Lord, I know only you can do it.

Answer in your acceptable time. Answer me. Make haste to answer me.

All these different situations, he's still trusting God. Because he knows who God is. He knows what God is able to do.

And as you see in verse 18, it's talking there about the God who is able to redeem. Throw an ear to my soul, redeem me, ransom me because of my enemies.

[12:46] You see, David pleads with God because he is the one who is able to redeem, able to save, able to ransom.

And both these words tie in with what we have in Christ. David pleads that he would be redeemed by God and God heard his prayer.

And we know it for ourselves today that God is the one who can redeem and ransom us. And how do we know that?

Well, it's because we look to the cross. As we read in Matthew chapter 27, what we see with Jesus on the cross crying out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why? To redeem his people, to ransom his people, to pay the price for us.

[13:53] he's standing in our place. He's bearing our sin. He's redeeming his people.

So that's how he cries, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? To redeem his people.

God, there's a story used many years ago to illustrate the meaning of redemption. There's the story of a minister of a church in America, in Boston, in America.

Outside the church one day, he met this young boy coming along the street, and the boy had a cage, a rusty old cage, and inside the cage were several birds, sort of just flapping around in distress, wanting out of the cage.

And the minister asked the boy, where did you get those birds? And the boy replied, I trapped them out in the field. And so the minister asked, what are you going to do with them?

[15:00] And he says, well, I'm going to take them home and I'll play with them for a wee while, and I guess I'll feed them to the old cat at home. And the minister's reply was, to offer to buy the birds.

The boy was surprised, why would you want these birds? They're just useless old birds. They don't even sing, look at them. And the minister was adamant, no, I want to buy these birds, I'll give you two dollars, which was a lot of money at that time.

And the boy was surprised, why on earth would you want to give me that kind of money? And he says to them, you're getting the bad deal here, but I'll take your two dollars, you take the birds.

So they did the exchange. And the minister took the cage out to the back of the church, a garden with trees out the back of the church, and immediately he released the birds.

And the birds flew up into the sky, into the trees, and there they were singing and chirping away. The next Sunday he took the empty cage into the pulpit and used it as an illustration.

[16:07] he talked about Christ coming to seek and to save the lost, and how he paid for his people, the ransom, he redeemed his people by his precious blood.

And he said, this young boy told me the birds couldn't sing, but as soon as I released them, they started to sing. And he was saying it's a reminder to us all that we are captive to sin.

We have no joy to sing when we are captive to sin. But when we see that Christ has paid the ransom, Christ has redeemed us, when we come to know that and to experience that, our cry is changed from a pleading to a praise.

Instead of, Lord, answer me, answer me in your time, answer me, answer me in haste, we will come praising. God is able to change our cry from one of pleading to praise.

That's the wonder of the price that God has paid for us. To redeem us, to ransom us, he gave himself.

[17:32] himself. So we see first then the cry. The second thing we see here is the cup. And we see that in verse 19 to verse 21.

Here it says, you know you know my reproach and my shame and my dishonor. My foes are all known to you. Reproaches have broken my heart so that I am in despair.

I looked for pity, but there was none for comforters, but I found none. They gave me poison for food and for my thirst. They gave me sour wine to drink.

Here is the experience of the psalmist David. This is his cup as we would say. This is his portion, his circumstances at this time. This is what he has to go through.

And all of us have a cup to bear. All of us have a set of circumstances to come through. And what we see here in verse 19 to 21 is his sense of being engulfed by shame and being abandoned of all comfort.

[18:41] There is nowhere to turn. Reproaches, this unjust suffering, it is breaking his heart. He is in despair. I looked and there was no comforter to be found.

But what do you see here? Just like back in verse 5, he says there that God knows. In verse 5, O God, you know my folly.

Well, here he is saying in verse 19, you know my reproach. So we ask ourselves, is there any comfort in these words? We see there is in the knowledge that God knows.

God knows his every experience. He knows the cup he is to bear. He knows everything that he has to go through.

And he's not blind to it. And he knows your cup. He knows my cup. You look back to the days of Exodus.

[19:52] In Exodus 2, verse 23, it says, during those many days, the king of Egypt died. And the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help.

The cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. And God heard their groaning. And God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.

God saw the people of Israel. And it just goes on to say this, and God knew. And it seems to just end there.

And God knew. What did God know? He knew their suffering, but he knew what had to be done.

And he took action. And here as David is crying out, you know my reproach, or as he has in verse 5, you know my folly.

[20:53] We could say he knows our sin, and he knows our suffering, and he knows what needs to be done about it. And what has been done about it?

Well, God sent his son into this world. Because he knew our cup, he knew our portion, he knew our suffering, and he knew we could do nothing about it, but he knew.

And he knew what to do about it. And as we trust God, we can be assured that his desires for his people is for good.

The New Testament reminds us that Jesus' own experience reflects David's at so many points. death. It's Matthew who remembers this psalm, the account of Jesus' death.

Matthew 27, verse 34, where it says, as we've read, they gave him wine to drink mixed with gall, and after tasting it, he would not drink it.

[22:01] Really following on from these words of Psalm 21. They gave me sour wine to drink for my thirst. Now, why wouldn't Jesus drink this?

Because the wine was like a medication. It would have almost put him out. And he didn't want this. He was in control at every step of the way. He was our redeemer, our ransom. He paid the price on the cross.

Not dulled to any of it. He bore our sin. And why was that? Because when you go back to Matthew 26, when Jesus is in the garden of Gethsemane, what does it say about the cup there?

He says he's praying in the garden of Gethsemane in chapter 26, verse 39. Going a little further, he fell on his face and prayed, saying, my father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.

[23 : 12] Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will. He took the cup. He bore our sins.

He died on the cross. John Newton, wrote a hymn, in evil long I took delight.

I want to close with these words as we think for ourselves and what the cross means to us. In our crying to God, and in the cup that we have in this life, should we not look to the cry of our saviour, as he cried out to God, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

And we think of his cry there, and we think of the cup that he took. If it be your will, may this cup pass me by, but not my will, but yours be done.

And that would help us to focus ourselves to the cross, and to see what Jesus has done for us.

John Newton in this hymn, he speaks about his own life transformed.

[24 : 32] In evil long I took delight, unawed by shame or fear, till a new object struck my sight and stopped my wild career. I saw one hanging on a tree, in agonies and blood, who fixed his languid eyes on me, as near his cross I stood.

Sure never till my latest breath can I forget that look. It seemed to change, to charge me with his death, though not a word he spoke.

My conscience felt and owned the guilt and plunged me in despair. I saw my sins his blood had spilt and helped to nail him there.

Alas, I knew not what I did, but now my tears are vain. where shall my trembling soul be hid, for I the Lord have slain.

A second look he gave, which said, I freely all forgive. This blood is for thy ransom paid, I die that thou mayst live.

[25 : 42] Thus, while his death my sin displays, in all its blackest hue, such is the mystery of grace, it seals my pardoned too.

With pleasing grief and mournful joy, my spirit now is filled, that I should such a life destroy, yet live by him I killed.

His life was changed by the grace of God, a life lived turning away from God, but looking to the cross, and seeing his saviour, who shed his blood for him.

Draw near to my soul, he cries in the psalm, redeem me, ransom me, because of my enemies.

David got answer, and so did you and I, when our saviour bore our sins, and so as we prepare ourselves for the Lord's supper, we look to the cross, where he gave his life, that we might come and do this in remembrance of him.

Amen, and may God bless these thoughts to us. We're going to sing to God's praise and conclusion.