

When Trouble Is Near And God Is Far

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[0 : 00] Please take your Bibles and open them up this morning to the book of Psalms. Book of Psalms and we're on chapter 22 this morning.! We're taking a break from our series in Genesis to continue our summer series walking through! The book of Psalms.

And this morning we've come to one that ought to sound fairly familiar to you, at least in a few verses. Even if you're not completely familiar with all of Psalm 22, you should recognize some of the words here because the gospel authors take this Psalm of David and apply it to the crucifixion and the suffering of King Jesus.

So Psalm 22, when you found that in your Bible, let's stand together in honor of the reading of God's Word. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from saving me from the words of my groaning? Oh my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer. And by night, but I find no rest.

Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. In you our fathers trusted. They trusted and you delivered them.

[1 : 19] To you they cried and were rescued. In you they trusted and were not put to shame. 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. He trusts in the Lord. Let him deliver him. Let him rescue him, for he delights in him. Yet you are he who took me from the womb.

You made me trust you at my mother's breasts. On you I was 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. Many bulls encompass me. Strong bulls of Bashan surround me. They open wide their mouths at me like a ravening and roaring lion.

I am poured out like water. And all my bones are out of joint. My heart is like wax. It is melted within my breast. My strength is dried up like a pot shirt.

[2 : 22] And my tongue sticks to my jaws. You lay me in the dust of death. For dogs encompass me. A company of evildoers encircles me.

They have pierced my hands and feet. I can count all my bones. They stare and gloat over me. They divide my garments among them. And for my clothing they cast lots.

But you oh Lord do not be far off. Oh 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. I will tell of your name to my brothers.

In the midst of the congregation I will praise you. You who fear the Lord praise him. All you his offspring of Jacob glorify him. And stand in awe of him all you offspring of Israel.

[3 : 22] For he is not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted. And he has not hidden his face from him. But has heard when he cried to him. From you comes my praise in the great congregation.

My vows I will perform before those who fear him. The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied. Those who seek him shall praise the Lord. May your hearts live forever.

All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord. And all the families of the nations shall worship before you. For kingship belongs to the Lord.

And he rules over the nations. All the prosperous of the earth eat and worship. Before him shall bow down all who go down to the dust. Even the one who could not keep himself alive.

Posterity shall serve him. It shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation. They shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn. That he has done it.

[4 : 24] Father. We praise you for the great work of salvation. We praise you for the gospel of Christ.

And again we pray now as we open up this text together. Lord would you speak. We pray in Jesus name. Amen. You may be seated. Amen. I'm not sure where you were about nine years ago about this time.

But I know exactly where I was. I was glued to my television. Watching the NBA finals. Where King James LeBron had led the Cleveland Cavaliers.

Right into a battle. With one of the greatest teams ever assembled. The 73 win Golden State Warriors. As in 73 wins and only nine losses.

Now for the entire season. Y'all don't look too impressed by that. That's the best record in NBA history. Okay. Nobody's ever done it. Nobody had ever won 73 games in a season before.

[5 : 28] And nobody had ever come back from being down three games to one in a finals series before. That is until King James climbed back from the brink of elimination.

Pulled off what was thought to be impossible. And completed the most unlikely unbelievable comeback in NBA history. Why in the world are we talking about this?

Because it's June. And yes the finals are on. But more importantly. Because this morning as we look at Psalm 22. What we see here in this text is another seemingly impossible comeback.

King David is on the brink of defeat in this text. The odds are stacked against him heavily. It looks like there is no way out for King David.

And to make matters worse. It seems as if God himself doesn't even care. David here. He articulates something that we all feel from time to time if we're honest.

[6 : 35] But maybe sometimes are afraid to say out loud. He says God have you left me here in my trial? God don't you care what I'm going through?

My God. My God. Have you abandoned me? Of course as we'll see. No. God has not forsaken David. And while the psalm begins in turmoil.

It ends in triumph. And against all odds. The king lives another day. And he lives to tell the tale. And the glory of a God who saves.

If I could sum up the song in one sentence. I would do it like this. The king's unlikely deliverance. Leads to the king's universal declaration.

I'll say that again. This is the big idea here. The king's unlikely deliverance. Leads to the king's universal declaration. So let's look at it together.

[7 : 34] And we'll see it here in three parts this morning. This will be our outline. If you're taking notes. And I try to make it a little easy for you to follow along. Three parts this morning. First. In verses 1 through 11.

We see the turmoil of the king. The turmoil of the king. As you look at the text. Verses 1 through 11. They sort of give us this sort of internal dialogue.

We see the interplay here between turmoil and trust. And trial and truth. It's like David is recording this conversation with himself. And we get to listen in as he's both expressing his pain.

And reminding himself of the truth. And you know Christian. Sometimes Christians need to be reminded that it's okay to do both. The world that we live in is tough.

In a sin cursed world. We experience things like pain. And loss. And grief. And sorrow. And hardship. It's okay.

[8 : 34] David shows us all through the Psalms. It's okay both to see that. And to express that to the Lord. But Christians also. They face these trials by reminding themselves of the truth.

And so let's look here at what David has to say. Verses 1 and 2. He says he feels abandoned by God. My God. My God.

Why have you forsaken me? Why have you abandoned me here in my suffering? Why are you so far from saving me? Why are you so far from my groanings?

This is David the king expressing a feeling that we've all experienced at some point or another. God seems to be off duty when we need him most. It's not as if David hasn't been reaching out.

David says he's praying. He's calling out day and night. Day and night. And yet he gets no answer from the Lord. His radio silence. I've had this experience before where it seems like I can get Amanda on the phone anytime I want.

[9 : 44] Very quickly. She's usually very responsive. I usually call and she usually answers unless I am in a moment of urgent need. And then at that time, for whatever reason, that phone call gets lost

in the airwaves.

She decides for whatever reason at that time, she's going to take a break from her phone. And the call doesn't go through. The bad news is that sometimes we pray and God doesn't immediately answer, does he?

Sometimes it seems like God has turned his phone off. David is in turmoil because it seems like God is not answering and he feels abandoned by the Lord.

That's the feeling. But now look here at the truth. Verse 3. Yet, he reminds himself, yet you are holy. Enthroned on the praises of Israel.

You are holy. You know, whatever is happening to us in our life, it doesn't change the fact that God is holy.

[10:50] And good. And praiseworthy. And righteous. God is not only good when things are going good with us. He is good.

Period. Period. He is praiseworthy. Period. Period. David reminds himself of this. Not only this, he reminds himself in verse 4 that God has been faithful.

He reminds himself of God's past faithfulness. In you our fathers trusted, he says. Verse 4. They trusted and you delivered them. To you they cried and were rescued.

In you they trusted. And they were not put to shame. And no doubt David knew the stories of how God had worked in the life of his people. He knew the stories of the exodus. He knew the stories of the wanderings in the wilderness.

He knew the stories of the conquest in Canaan. He knows God has worked to deliver before. And there's a tension here now that David feels. I know you're faithful.

[11:52] I know you've delivered before. So what about me? I'd venture to say we've all experienced this before as well. We have seen and we have heard stories of God working for others in powerful ways.

We've heard stories of God working in our friends' lives. This guy gets a raise. This guy seems so happy. This guy's family is just so perfect. This guy has so many friends.

He says, well God, what about me? What about David? He says, verse 6, I am a worm and not a man.

He reminds himself of another truth here, doesn't he? A less popular truth. He reminds himself in verse 6 of his unworthiness. I am a worm, he says.

This trial, whatever it is, we don't know the exact context of this psalm, but this trial has brought David to this place where he sees God as high and lifted up and holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel, worthy of worship, and himself as a lowly worm, unworthy.

[13:12] He's come to this place where he acknowledges, God, I need you, but you owe me no response. I need you, but you owe me no favor.

You don't owe me a thing, and yet I'm going to call out to you in faith because you are good, you are holy, you are faithful, you are merciful, you are powerful to save, and I have no hope apart from you.

What a wonderful place to be. Now sometimes, intense, prolonged, terrible suffering is the tool that God uses in our lives to bring us to that place of total dependence on him.

David calls out to the Lord as a weak, needy, unworthy man. This is exactly how God wants us to come to him. And look how other people respond to this.

Everybody around him mocks him and makes faces at him, and he's become the laughingstock of everybody around him. They mock him, say, he trusts in the Lord, let him save him.

[14:23] Let the Lord rescue him, he's putting his faith in him. Yet, verse 9, here's another reminder of the truth. Verse 9, I'm mocked for trusting you, yet, why do I trust you?

David says, you've made me trust you. I'm ridiculed for calling out to you, but you have put this trust in my heart.

From my mother's womb, you have been my God. As he faces this trial, he reminds himself of God's eternal purpose in his life.

God chose him, not the other way around. God put that trust in him, not the other way around. God has taken him and preserved him and cared for him and provided him since he was a child in his mother's womb.

And surely, if that's true, God will not abandon him now. Now, what a comfort it is to know, Christian, in times of trial, in times of suffering, that God himself has taken it upon himself to save

you.

[15 : 35] God chose you in Christ from before the foundation of the world. That God called you to himself and gave you the gift of faith.

That God has adopted you into his own family. That God did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all. How will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

If you belong to him, take heart. He will never leave you, nor forsake you. So then, in light of this truth, David prays, Lord, be not far from me, for trouble is near, and there is none to help.

In fact, we see some of the trouble in the next several verses. Second point, we see the terrorizers of the king. You see the terrorizers of the king.

Here in verses 12 through 18, we get a look at the enemies here that are taunting David and terrorizing King David. He says in verses 12 and 13, there's danger all around.

[16 : 38] The strong bulls of Bashan are surrounding him. We don't know what in the world the strong bulls of Bashan are, do we? But in this context, the bulls of Bashan were strong and well-fed and meaty and terrifying animals.

This is language of a terrifying enemy. He compares them to lions roaring with their mouths open, jaws ready to clamp down and devour. Down in verse 16, he compares them to dogs, and this isn't like a golden doodle or a Bernese mountain dog.

These are vicious, dirty creatures that carry disease and eat from the garbage, lick the sores of the dying. This is a picture of enemies that are dirty and hungry and violent and strong, and they have him surrounded and they're ready to pounce.

These are terrible enemies. Not only this, David says he's in terrible pain. He has no strength to fight these enemies. Look how he describes his pain in verse 14.

He says, I am poured out like water. All his bones are out of joint. The pain is so intense. He says in verse 17, he can count all his bones.

[17 : 52] Just imagine that. You know what it feels like when you have a fever and you feel like you can just feel every little ache and pain. He's saying that every single bone is crying out to him in intense agony.

His heart is melted within his chest. His strength is no better than a broken piece of pottery. His mouth is so dry that his tongue sticks to his jaws. You add it all up here.

The bones don't work. His heart doesn't work. His tongue doesn't work. His strength doesn't work. His muscles don't work. Nothing works. The king is broken.

God himself lays him in the dust of death. And all those vicious enemies start to circle around him like vultures around a carcass.

They cast lots for his clothing. They're ready to celebrate and declare victory over the king. Ask yourself, why would anyone want to kill God's anointed king?

[18 : 55] Why would anyone be this eager to come and to tear apart God's anointed king? Of course we know time and time again David went into battle. David faced enemies.

It's not unusual for a king to have enemies that want him dead. But we have to remember this isn't just any king, isn't it? There is a spiritual dimension here that we need to understand.

There's a spiritual conflict that's driving this assassination attempt on King David. The seed of the serpent is trying yet again to snuff out the seed of the woman.

We saw all the way back in Genesis 3 this promise from the Lord. I will put enmity between you and the woman, between her seed and your seed. The offspring of the serpent will wage war against the offspring of the woman until the time comes when that promised offspring will crush the head of the serpent and end the conflict for good.

Don't you know? Satan knows the promises God made to David to bring about the promised Messiah through him, to give him an eternal kingdom.

[20 : 09] Of course the enemy wants him dead. Up until the point when the Messiah finally came, the seed of the serpent is trying to snuff him out.

But now that he's come, guess who he's after? Now that the Messiah has come, guess who the enemy is after?

If he can't have the king, he will come after the citizens of the kingdom. If he can no longer cut off the head, he will lash out at the body. The church, we, the church, are God's own offspring.

We're citizens of the kingdom of God. We are the very body of Christ the King here on earth. Why should we be surprised? That we also face great and powerful, dangerous enemies.

We face enemies that are more numerous than dogs, that are stronger than bulls, that are more vicious than lions, and enemies that want us dead. We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, brothers and sisters, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

[21 : 30] The world is an enemy with all its allure and enticements. The flesh is an enemy. Our flesh is weak and prone to wonder.

Our appetites are not always for the Lord in this life. And the devil is an enemy. That great enemy prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

How in the world can we face such great enemies? What strength do we have to fight against them? Where do we turn when we're overwhelmed and under intense attack?

Look what David does here in verse 19. He turns yet again with trust in the Lord. I love this.

He prays yet again. Do you notice that? Do you see the persistence of the king? He feels abandoned by God. God, you're not picking up. So what does he do?

[22 : 30] He prays. He's not getting an answer for his prayers day and night, day and night, day and night. So what does he do? He prays. He's mocked for trusting in the Lord and for calling out to him.

So what does he do? He trusts the Lord. The enemies are at his throat. God still has not delivered. Seems like the end is near.

So what does he do? He prays. 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. Now when we're going through it, you know what I mean, going through it.

Don't treat prayer and trust as halfway solutions to your problem. Some of y'all are problem solvers.

[23 : 29] That's me. I want steps to take, things to do, ways to resolve. I want out of that situation immediately and I want to take a step to get there.

David prays. He doesn't give any action steps. There's no step one, step two, step three. It's simply, I have nothing.

I need you, Lord. Prayer and trust. Prayer and trust. Prayer and trust. And when that doesn't work, prayer and trust. God's people must learn to persevere in prayer.

Jonathan Edwards. He says, It is very apparent from the word of God that he often tries the faith and patience of his people when they are crying to him for some great and important mercy by withholding the mercy sought for a season.

And not only so, but at first, he may cause an increase of dark appearances. And yet he, without fail, at last prospers those who continue urgently in prayer with all perseverance and will not let him go except he blesses.

[24 : 40] Christian, if you are facing something that feels like it's about to eat you alive, remind yourself of the truth. God is good. God is holy. God is faithful.

God is worthy. God owes you nothing. God has given you everything. God has called you to himself in faith. And then pray and trust.

And when that doesn't seem to work, pray and trust. David here shows us what it looks like to persevere in faith and tremendous suffering.

And what we see next is that against all odds, God intervenes and finally answers. God saves the king and he lives to tell the tale.

So the rest of this psalm, verses 22 through 31, show us third, the tale of the king. Look there starting in verse 21. This is a complete reversal here in the rest of the psalm.

[25 : 41] Starting at the end of verse 21, he's prayed, he's prayed, he's prayed, he's prayed, he's near the end and finally the end of verse 21, he says, you have rescued me.

You've rescued me from the horns of the wild oxen. God seemed absent, but now he has come in delivering power.

Trouble was near and God was far, but now everything changes. God has come near and the trouble fades into the background. The king was good as dead, but now he lives to tell the story. Verse 22 says, I will tell of your name to my brothers. In the midst of the congregation, I will praise you. He can't keep quiet. He gathers the people around him a little bit like what we're doing right now.

He gathers God's people together and he proclaims the great work of God on his behalf. And then he calls them to join in with him, doesn't he? You who fear the Lord, praise him.

[26 : 46] All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him. Stand in awe of him. All you offspring of Israel, this God is worthy of our praise for what he's done. Great salvation leads to great proclamation.

Unlikely deliverance leads to universal declaration. Christian, this ought to be the response of our heart to what God has done for you in Christ.

I love when we get to celebrate a baptism. We get to hear a testimony of the grace of God in somebody's life to save them and to bring them to saving faith in Jesus.

You know, that is a miracle, church. That is unlikely deliverance, isn't it? We get to hear the story how somebody went and shared the gospel with them, whether it was mom or dad or a friend, a neighbor, a co-worker.

They begin to listen and to hear it in a new light all of a sudden. At some point, maybe it was suddenly and maybe it was over time, but it was like the lights came on and they got it.

[27 : 55] They saw their desperate need for Christ. They saw their unworthiness and they saw God as their only hope. They trusted him to save.

That's a miracle. And we as the congregation, when we hear that sort of testimony, what do we do? We stand in awe of him. We stand in awe of the God who works unlikely salvation in sinners like us every day.

Our salvation is a story of unlikely deliverance. Now, if you're a Christian, you know this firsthand that God does not despise or abhor the affliction of the afflicted.

God does not turn his face away from his children. When we cry to him, he hears and he answers. And if you're not a Christian, what good news is it for you to hear this morning that the Lord loves to save the weak?

The Lord loves to save the unable and the unimpressive and those who can't help themselves. The Lord loves to save those who call on him in faith and trust.

[29 : 04] Your situation's not too bleak or too dark or too low. You are not too far gone from the Lord to save. The king's salvation is reason for all of God's people, all Israel to rejoice, but not just Israel.

Verse 27. He says, all the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord. All the families of the nations shall worship before you, he says.

This is not just reason for Israel to rejoice. This is now expanding to the praise of the nations coming in for the Lord. For kingship belongs to the Lord and he's not just king of Israel.

He is king of the nations. They will eat and worship and celebrate and rejoice and be satisfied together. All the earth as one people, generation after generation after generation, from people to people, nation to nation, will hear and give glory to the Lord as they tell the tale of a king who saves. David had a great story to tell. of the amazing power of God to save. But of course, we know, don't we? This psalm ultimately is pointing us forwards towards an even greater salvation for an even greater king from an even greater enemy.

[30 : 41] And those who know it live to tell an even greater story of God's grace and power in redemption. This psalm is pointing us forwards to the coming king Jesus.

Jesus' suffering was far greater than David's. He was surrounded by his enemies.

He was mocked and beaten to the point of death. He was whipped. He was cursed. He was hung on a cross. His hands and his feet were pierced and for his clothing they cast lots.

Should you ever be tempted to think that God doesn't care about your suffering? Look to the cross of Christ and remember God himself has come and stepped into our suffering to redeem what's been broken and lost by the fall.

If anybody knew the pain of suffering it was Jesus. Not just physical suffering of King Jesus he felt the anguish of David as well as he hung on the cross he quoted this very psalm my God my God why have you forsaken me?

[32 : 06] There's a mystery here it's hard for us to fully grasp the weight of these words isn't it? Jesus the God man suffered and died bearing the full weight of the wrath of God against the sin of his people he made him who knew no sin to become sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God the son of God became man so that in his flesh he might bear the wrath of God for the sins of his people as near to death as David was King Jesus actually descended fully to the grave his enemies divided his garments among them for his clothing they cast lots he was really

truly completely actually dead and all the enemies rejoiced the seed of the woman has been snuffed out at last he's been finally defeated or so they thought as great as David's comeback was the victory of King

Jesus is that much greater when Jesus quotes this psalm on the cross of course yes he's identifying with the anguish of David but he's also pointing us forwards towards the end you know Jesus knows how this psalm ends he knows it ends with salvation and proclamation and sharing the story of the victory of the king and the glory of God for the praise of the nations Christ knows on the cross that even as death approaches he will live to tell the tale I will tell your name to my brothers in the midst of the congregation I will praise you as great as King David's proclamation was Jesus is even greater all the earth will bend the knee and give glory to God for who he is and what he's done in the salvation of the king Christian if you are suffering if you're not now gird up your loins prepare yourself if you are suffering if it feels like trouble is near and God is far would you look to Christ who was forsaken for you would you look to Christ and see the holiness and the faithfulness of God on display would you look to Christ and see your unworthiness and God's graciousness would you look to the cross of Christ and see the salvation planned by God the Father before the ages began would you look to the cross of Christ and see all of our enemies defeated and would you look to the empty tomb and see his deliverance and our deliverance in him and until he comes again would you tell the tale of the king who defeated death Christ the king has come and conquered and will come again to bring full and final salvation and we his people will eat and worship and be satisfied for the rest of eternity let's pray

Lord we praise you for your power and your grace and your goodness and your holiness on display in the gospel of Christ if there are any here who feel far from you if there are any here who are suffering who have cried out day and night feel like they get no relief no answer Lord would you draw near to them remind them this morning of your nearness to them in Christ if there are any here who don't know you we pray that you would draw them to yourself in faith we love you Lord we pray this in Jesus name Amen Amen