

PSALM 22:1-31

CHAPTER STUDIES ON THE PSALTER

"Jesus is forsaken because our sins had separated us and our God."

(Ps. 22:1) My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? Gaze with holy wonder. Mark the flashes of light in the awful darkness of that midday midnight. Our Lord's faith shines. It deserves our reverent imitation. He keeps hold on His God with both hands and cries twice, **My God, My God!** The spirit of adoption was strong in the suffering Son of Man, and He did not feel any doubt about His interest in His God. Oh, if we could imitate this clinging to an afflicting God! The sufferer trusts God's power to sustain Him. The title used, El, signifies strength, and it is the name of the Mighty God. He knows the Lord is the all-sufficient support and comfort of His spirit. He appeals to Him in the agony of grief but not in misery of doubt. Jesus raises that question and repeats it. Yet He does not mistrust God's power and faithfulness. What a question, **Why hast Thou forsaken Me?** We must lay the emphasis on every word of this saddest of all utterances.

Why: What is the great cause of this strange fact? Why would God leave His own Son at such a time and in such a plight? Since there was no cause in Jesus, why, then, was He deserted?

Have [hast]: It is done. The Savior feels its dread effect as He asks the question. It

is surely true, but how mysterious! It was no threat of forsaking that made the great Surety cry aloud. He endured that forsaking in an actual deed.

You [Thou]: I can understand why traitorous Judas and timid Peter should be gone, but **You**, My God, My faithful friend, how can You leave me? This is worst of all, worse than all put together. The fiercest flame of hell is for the separation of the soul from God.

Forsaken: If You had chastened I might bear it, for Your face would shine, but to utterly forsake me!

Why Me?: Your innocent, obedient, suffering Son, why do You leave Me to perish? The sight of self as seen by penitence, and the sight of Jesus on the cross as seen by faith, will best expound this question. Jesus is forsaken because our sins had separated us and our God.

(Ps. 22:6) But I am a worm, and no man. This verse is a miracle in language. How could the Lord of glory be brought to such abasement as to be not only lower than the angels, but also lower than men? What a contrast between "I AM" and **I am a worm!** Yet this double nature was found in the person of our Lord Jesus when He bled on the tree. He felt comparable to a helpless, powerless, down-

trodden worm, passive while crushed and unnoticed and despised by those who stepped on him. Jesus selects the weakest of creatures, which is all flesh, and becomes, when stepped on, writhing, quivering flesh, utterly devoid of any might except the strength to suffer. This was a true likeness of Jesus. His body and soul became a mass of misery, the essence of agony in the dying pangs of crucifixion. We, by nature, are worms. Yet our Lord puts Himself even beneath us, because of the scorn heaped on Him and the weakness that He felt. Thus, He adds, **and no man**. The privileges and blessings that belonged to the fathers could not be obtained while He was deserted by God. Common acts of humanity were not allowed by Him. He was rejected. He was outlawed from earth's society and shut out from heaven's smile. How utterly the Savior emptied Himself of all glory and became of no reputation for our sakes (Phil. 2:7).

A reproach of men, their common butt and jest, their byword and proverb, a sport of the rabble, the scorn of the rulers. Oh the caustic power of reproach to those who endure it with patience yet painfully hurt under it!

And despised by [of] the people. The population was against Him. The people who would once have crowned Him now despised Him. Those who had received His cures sneered at His woes. Sin is worthy of all reproach and contempt, and

Jesus, the Sin-bearer, was given up to be unworthily and shamefully treated.

(Ps. 22:11) Be not far from Me. This is the petition He has been using for such varied and powerful pleas. His great woe was that God had forsaken Him. His great prayer was that He would be near Him. A lively sense of the divine presence is a mighty support to the heart in times of distress.

For trouble is near; for there is none to help. There are two "fors", as though faith gave a double knock at the gate of mercy. It is a powerful prayer, full of holy reasons and thoughtful arguments. The nearness of trouble is a weighty motive for divine help; it moves our heavenly Father's heart and brings His helping hand. It is His glory to be our "very present help in trouble" (Ps. 46:1). Our Substitute had trouble in His inmost heart, for He said, "The waters have come up to my neck. I sink in deep mire" (Ps. 69:1-2). Well might He cry, **Be not far from Me**.

The absence of all other helpers is another telling plea. In our Lord's case, none could or would help Him. It was necessary that He trod the winepress alone (Is. 63:3). Yet it was a sore aggravation to find that all His disciples had forsaken Him. There is awfulness about absolute friendlessness that crushes the human mind. We were not made to be alone and are like a severed limb when we have to endure loneliness of heart.

(Ps. 22:12) Many bulls have [compassed] surrounded Me; strong bulls of Bashan have [beset] encircled Me. The victim's tearful eye marked the mighty in the crowd. The priests, elders, scribes, Pharisees, rulers, and captains bellowed around the Cross like wild cattle, fed in the fat and solitary pastures of Bashan (Deut. 32:14). Full of strength and fury, they stamped and foamed around the innocent One, longing to gore Him to death with their cruelties. Think of the Lord Jesus as a helpless, unarmed, naked man, thrown in the midst of a herd of infuriated wild bulls. They were brutal as bulls, many and strong, and the Rejected One was alone, naked, and bound to the tree. His position throws great force into the earnest plea, "Be not far from me" (v. 11).

(Ps. 22:14) Turning from His enemies, our Lord describes His personal condition in language that brings tears to every loving eye. **I am poured out like water.** He was utterly spent, like water poured on the earth. His heart failed Him; it had no more firmness than running water. His being was a sacrifice, poured out before the Lord. He had long been a fountain of tears. In Gethsemane His heart welled over in sweat, and on the Cross blood gushed from Him. He poured out His strength and spirit and was reduced to the most feeble and exhausted state. **All My bones are out of joint,** as if distended on a rack. Is it not highly possible that

when they were nailing His hands and feet, and when He felt the jolt of putting the Cross in the earth, that the bones of the Crucified One were dislocated?

My heart is like wax; [it is melted in the midst of my bowels] it has melted within Me. Excessive debility and intense pain made His inner life feel like melted wax. The Greek liturgy uses the expression, "Your unknown sufferings," and well it may. The fire of Almighty wrath would have consumed our souls forever in hell; it was no light work to bear as a substitute the heat of anger so justly terrible. Dr. Gill wisely observes, "If the heart of Christ, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, melted, what heart can endure, what hands can be strong, when God deals in His wrath?"

(Ps. 22:19) [But be not Thou far from me] But You, O LORD, do not be far from Me. Invincible faith returns to the charge and uses the same means: continual, urgent prayer. He repeats the previous petition that was so piteously offered. He wants nothing but His God. Even in His lowest state, Jesus does not ask for the most comfortable or nearest presence of God. He will be content if He is not far from God. Humble requests prosper at the throne.

O My Strength, [haste Thee] hasten to help Me! Hard cases need timely aid. We may be urgent with God as to time; Hasten to help me, but we must not do this out of willfulness. In the last degree of personal weakness Jesus calls the Lord,

My strength. After this fashion the believer can sing, "For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:10).

(Ps. 22:20) Deliver [My soul] Me from the sword. The sword probably represents entire destruction, and as a man, He dreaded this. Or perhaps He sought deliverance from the enemies around Him, who were like a sharp and deadly sword. The Lord has said, "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd" (Zech. 13:7). And from that sword's terror, the Shepherd wanted deliverance when justice should see fit.

[My darling from the] My precious life from the power of the dog. His soul, His life, which is precious to everyone. The original is, "my only one." Our soul is precious, because it is our only soul. Would that all made their souls their darlings, but many treat them as if they were not worth so much as the dirt of the streets. **The dog** may mean Satan, that cursed and cursing cur, or the entire company of Christ's foes. They were as unanimous as if they were one. They sought with one consent to tear Him in pieces. If Jesus cried for help against the dog of hell, much more may we. Beware of the dog. His power is great, and only God can deliver us. When he flatters, we must not put ourselves in his power. When he howls, remember that God holds him with a chain.

(Ps. 22:31) They [shall] will come. Sovereign grace will bring the blood-bought ones. Nothing can stop the divine pur-

pose. The chosen will come to life, faith, pardon, and heaven. The dying Savior finds sacred satisfaction in this. Toiling servant of God, be glad that God's eternal purposes will not be hurt or hindered.

And [shall] declare His righteousness [unto] to a people [that shall] who will be born. None whom the irresistible attractions of the Cross bring to God will be silent. They will tell the Lord's righteousness, so that future generations will know the truth. Parents will teach their children, who will hand it down to their children. The story always being that **He [hath] has done this**, or "It is finished" (John 19:30). The glorious work of salvation is done. There is peace on earth and glory in the highest. "It is finished," were the words of the expiring Lord Jesus, and, He has done this are the last words of this Psalm. May we, by living faith, see our salvation finished by the death of Jesus! (*The Treasury of David*, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, updated by Mark Wash)

Why is what happened to Jesus in Psalm 22:1 (Mark 15:34) so necessary? Isa. 53:10 Micah 6:13

What is necessary for us before we can give God the proper respect? Ps. 22:23, 26