

# Christ in the Psalms

## The Psalm of the Suffering Savior



WEST SOUND COMMUNITY CHURCH

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From the cross our Savior gasped the most horrifying words of all time, “*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*” “But why,” some may ask, “are these not some of the words Jesus spoke while both willingly and lovingly giving his life as a ransom for all of us?” To which we must respond, “Yes, and from that perspective, his words may also be heard as the most compassionate cry of all time.”

However, from another perspective, from the heart of God, they are words of eternal anguish. They are the cry of the Son of God as he paid the price for the sin of all mankind...as he in some inexplicable way found himself—again in some unaccountable, unfathomable, mysterious, baffling, time splitting, eternal way—torn asunder, ripped...from God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. Without destruction or defilement, the Triune God experienced the grief of dirty death. Yes, dirty, rotten death. Never intended, but nonetheless necessary. The price for sin. A debt not owed, but paid still. The price we owed, but could never pay. No wonder the Savior asked, “*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*”

Yet, is this the whole story? Is this mystery summarized merely by looking at the words of Jesus spoken on the cross and recorded by Matthew (27:46)? Is there more? You bet! In fact, our Savior was not the first person to utter this anguished cry of despair. In Psalm 22, we can see them spoken hundreds of years earlier by King David. In that setting, they were, in part prophetic, but also words of his own heart...and ultimately words of our hearts. Let’s take a look. Then let’s bring it full circle back to Jesus...the One who knows our hearts perfectly, sympathizes with our hearts perfectly, and heals our hearts perfectly.

The Psalm is divided into two parts. Verses one through eighteen express David’s heart cry...a prayer of his own feelings of separation. Verses nineteen through thirty-one express David’s heart cheer...a testimony of praise on behalf of the One who delivered him from his separation.

### First, the Agonized Prayer of Separation: 22:1-18

22:1, 2 “To the choirmaster: according to The Doe of the Dawn. A Psalm of David.

*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.”*

After a brief attribution of the Psalm from David, accompanied (probably) by music from the song “The Doe of the Dawn,” to to the Choirmaster, David jumped in with a bang...with a huge question...directed to God! “*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*” Wow! And he didn’t stop there. He continued...

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

Others have felt like this. Others have asked similar questions of God: Moses, Elijah, Jeremiah, to mention a few. Perhaps you have felt like this. What is it that causes the human soul to ask such questions of God...especially since we already know the answers? Is it the negative conditions in which we often find ourselves? Perhaps...after all, some negative conditions can seem overwhelming. For David, it was hard core enemies on all sides (see vss. 7, 12, 13, 18) and a body besieged by weariness and pain (see vss. 14, 15). However, it was not only his physical anguish. It was also his psychological anguish...his feelings (see vss. 2, 6, 7, 8, 11). He was a wounded man both externally and internally.

## Second, the Cheerful Praise of Deliverance: 22:19-31

22:19 *“But you, O LORD, do not be far off! O you my help, come quickly to my aid! “*

This is such a stirring contrast to David's earlier appeal in verse one: *“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?”* Let's pause for a moment to use our imaginations...to consider how this might have sounded to David if he had prolonged his thinking...muller over his words...

*“But Lord, even though it feels so very much like you are far away, far, far away from here, from me...even like maybe you have given up on me, abandoned me, forsaken me...no longer interested in saving me...again...like you have so many times...like maybe this time you are finished with me...even in this terrible moment of doubt and groaning...I know you are my sure salvation. I know you are not far away. I know you are with me and you can and you will quickly be my aid, my comfort, my answer, my salvation!”*

This is the alternative perspective to near hopelessness. This is the position of the faithful soul in the face of faithless enemies and faithless environments. This is where David had to turn. There could be no other true solution. There would be no other true solution. In fact, this perspective was always there...in David's mind and heart. Even while he poured out his grief, bewilderment, and fear during his agonized prayer of separation (vss. 1-18), he recalled God's previous faithfulness to his ancestors (vss. 4, 5) as well as to himself (vss. 9, 10).

Now, as he wraps up his psalm, he exults...he lifts up a heart filled with cheerful praise, because he knows the certainty of God's deliverance. Whether now or later, God is always faithful. His timing may not be my timing, but while mine is imperfect and misguided, his is perfect and omniscient. The Lord misses nothing.

22:19-31 *“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! 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 offspring of Jacob, glorify him, and stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel! For he has 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 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.”*

Notice too these truths were not reserved for David alone. As the Lord inspired David to pen these truths, he moved him past their application for David alone. In verses twenty-three and twenty-four, David placed the prayer of separation and the praise of deliverance in the mouths of the people of Israel: *“You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him, and stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel! For he has 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.”*

**Application:** If the agonized prayer of separation and the cheerful praise of deliverance were meant for all of Israel, then they are also meant for us.

1. We know this from the Book of Psalms itself.

1:1,2 *“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.”*

119:11 *“I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.”*

2. We also know this from many other passages.

Jos 1:7,8 *“Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.”*

Lam 3:20-23 *“My soul continually remembers it and is bowed down within me. But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”*

2 Tim 3:16,17 *“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”*

2 Pet 1:21 *“For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”*

## Conclusion

While already more incredible than we deserve, this is not all Psalm 22 offers. Yes, our Lord most certainly was quoting the opening heart cry of David in this psalm when he asked his Father the same question. Yes, God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, via their inspiration of David for the writing of this psalm, were prophetically dropping information regarding the Greater King—the Messiah. Yes, the offspring of David would be Emmanuel, God with Us, the Incarnate Son of God who would take away the sins of the world. This simply can't be missed when we read again verses sixteen through eighteen:

22:16-18 *“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.”*

Long before crucifixion was thought of, David here pens a perfect picture of it. There can be no mistake. The Messiah would come and the Messiah would suffer. The Messiah would be God incarnated as man and the Messiah would die for all mankind. However, while still way more incredible than we deserve, this is not the end of our Lord's intentions with Psalm 22 and his quoting from its first line as he died on the old rugged cross.

As awesome and compelling as all of this has been, there is yet one more thing to consider...and dear friend, I hope your heart, soul, mind, and will are utterly gripped by the “rest of the story.” While on the cross, Jesus delivered seven last comments...

- To the thief on the other cross: *“I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.”* (Luke 23:43)
- To his Mother and to John: *“Dear Woman, here is your son!”* and *“Here is your mother!”* (John 19:26,27)
- To the guards: *“I am thirsty.”* (John 19:28)
- To his Father: *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”* (Luke 23:34)
- To his Father: *“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”* (Matthew 27:46)
- To his Father: *“It is finished!”* (John 19:30)
- To his Father: *“Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.”* (Luke 23:46)

There on the cross, the incarnate Son of God—Perfect God/Perfect Man—while suffering both in his deity and humanity, spoke to his Father in heaven, his earthly Mom, the disciple who would love and care for his Mom, the sinner on the cross next to him, and the guards who spit on him. To his Father, he spoke the most powerful and confidential words ever...words we will probably never fully understand. To his earthly Mother, he spoke words of love, compassion, and hope. To his faithful disciple, he spoke words of trust and full acceptance. To the sinner on a cross just like his, he spoke words of salvation. To the guards, he spoke words to prompt them in ways that fulfilled prophecy. And, finally, in quoting David, he demonstrated that even then, even in those horrible moments, he was mindful of the whole magnificent, wonderful, grand scheme of the eternal providence of the Trinity. It wasn't just the one line from Psalm 22 he brought to bear on the closure of the cross, it was the whole history of both time and eternity.

It was the words of the Psalm, but it is also all the words of the word of God.  
It was David, but it is also all of Israel.

It was Israel, but it is also all of the realms of man...Jew and Gentile alike.

It was the faulty, faithless moments of David, but it is also the full faithfulness of his God.

It was the faulty, faithless movements of Israel, but it is also the full faithfulness of her God

It was the faulty, faithless sin of a thief on another cross, but it is also the faithfulness of his Savior.

It was the frailty of a Mom losing her son, but it is also the faith of a man who would be her new son.

It was the cold hearts of guards, but it is also the kind heart of a Savior who knew their ignorance.

Psalm 22:1            *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me"*

was the cry of a sometimes great sometimes grimy king of ancient Judah and Israel.

was the proxy cry of this ancient king on behalf of his people.

was the proxy cry from the heart of God on behalf of people everywhere during all times.

Matthew 27:46        *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me"*

was the cry of the Son of God when on the cross he felt an inexplicable distance from his Father.

was the cry of prophetic fulfillment as the Son of God announced the culmination of God's grace.

was the cry of inclusive salvation as the Son of God acknowledged the eternal intention of Psalm 22.

*"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me,"* is an eternal message from the heart of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit straight to the hearts and souls of men, women, and children everywhere that there really is no place in the purposes and plans of God for anyone to ever finally and completely conclude that he or she has been forsaken. It may be a feeling brought about by evil environments and enemies, but it's only feelings. It's not reality.

God the Father did not forsake David...and David knew it.

God the Father did not forsake Israel...and Israel could know it.

God the Father did not forsake God the Son...and Jesus knew it.

God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit has not forsaken us...do you know it?

