

4 addresses on 3 Psalms

Part 1

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[00:00:00] Psalm 22 Und in der Nachtsaison, und ich bin nicht leise, aber Du bist heilig, O Du, der uns die Gläubigen Israels besitzt. Unsere Väter haben an Dich vertraut. Sie haben vertraut, und Du hast ihnen geliefert. Sie haben an Dich gekriegt, und wurden geliefert. Sie haben an Dich vertraut, und wurden nicht verwechselt. Aber ich bin ein Wurm, und kein Mann.

Ich habe Angst vor den Männern und den Menschen. [00:01:05] Alle, die mich sehen, lachen mich aus. Sie schießen die Lippen aus. Sie schütteln den Kopf, und sagen, dass er auf den Herrn vertraut, dass er ihm geliefert wird. Lass ihn ihm geliefert werden, sehend, dass er in ihm glücklich ist. Aber Du bist er, der mich aus dem Wurm genommen hat. Du hast mir Hoffnung gegeben, als ich auf meiner Mutter's Brust lag. Ich wurde auf Dich aus dem Wurm gesetzt. Du bist mein Gott, aus meinem Müttergehirn. Sei nicht weit von mir, denn die Schmerze ist nahe, denn es gibt niemanden, der mir helfen kann. Viele Hunde sind vor mir gekommen, starke Hunde von Bächen haben mich umgedreht. Sie haben mich mit ihren Mäuern als einen schreckenden und schreckenden Löwen aufgemacht. [00:02:04] Ich bin ausgepumpt, wie Wasser, und alle meine Knochen sind ausgepumpt. Mein Herz ist wie Wachs.

Es ist in den Mitteln meiner Knochen gemolken. Meine Stärke ist wie ein Potschd ausgerührt, und meine Zunge schlägt an meine Zähne. Und Du hast mich in die Schmutz der Todes. Denn Hunde sind vor mir gekommen, die Versammlung der Wütenden hat mich umgedreht. Sie haben meine Hände und meine Füße zerstört. Ich kann all meine Knochen sagen, sie schauen und blicken auf mich. Sie teilen meine Klamotten zwischen sich, und stellen Lächeln auf meine Rüstung. Aber bleib nicht weit von mir, Herr. Oh, meine Stärke, helfe mich.

[00:03:03] Verliere meine Seele vom Schwert, mein Liebling, von der Macht der Hunde.

Save me from the lion's mouth.

When emergencies occur, they often happen so quickly that those immediately involved are so busy reacting in the emergency that there's very little time for reflection while things are coming to a head. And it's only afterwards that there's time to consider some of the deeper implications of what has happened or what has been said. And it's very rare that there's the opportunity to consider [00:04:02] before the event, during the event, and after the event the significance of something that's very important.

In the mercy of God, there has been preserved to us scriptures which tell us very plainly before the event, during the event, and after the event of what was involved when Jesus died at Calvary.

The Psalms in particular, written about a thousand years before the event, tell us what it felt like to the Lord Jesus.

[00:05:02] Not only at that dark, stark moment when he suffered for sins, but in the events leading up to his death at Calvary, what it meant to him, the perfect, sinless Son of God.

We often give thanks, don't we, that we are glad that we don't know what's just around the corner. We often feel we couldn't really face up to things. It's bad enough being involved in them at the time. But if we were given advice in advance of what was going to happen, we would never be able to face up to them. In his omniscience, the Lord Jesus knew full well not only what would occur, but why it would occur, [00:06:01] and all the issues involved.

Now we'll be looking at some verses along that line. It's well to note in passing that the Gospels record the events as they occurred and the comments of those who looked on. In the New Testament epistles, we are taught the deep significance and the results of the death of Christ upon the cross, the implications for him, the results for him, the implications for us, the results for us.

And we can reflect 2,000 years later upon all these things. But we are looking tonight at these verses which describe to perfection, again, let us say, 1,000 years in advance of the event, [00:07:03] words prophetically put onto the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ, what it would mean to him to die at Calvary.

Now, we'll be looking at one or two of the implications there. But what we would like to do is to go down these 20 verses and the first half of verse 21 in the spirit in which the Holy Spirit has included them in the canon of Scripture. Now, there are two questions, twice over we need to ask ourselves the question why. One relative to verse 1 where the word comes in, why, why hast thou forsaken me?

[00:08:01] And there's another question arises in the middle of verse 21.

And we would like to meditate just a little on what the answer to those two questions are. Certainly, we are obliged again to the Holy Spirit for including through the vessel Peter, the lovely words, the sufferings of the Christ and the glory that shall follow. And the first 20 and a half verses are certainly on this line, the sufferings of the Christ.

This is the evening of the seventh day of the week. If the Lord doesn't come for us tomorrow morning [00:09:01] will be the first day of the week.

The normal response of the committed Christian is to remember him, to remember their Lord and Savior in the breaking of bread.

As we read these verses, we may well need to consider again, each of us as individuals, am I a believer on the Lord Jesus Christ? Do I really believe that Christ died for my sins according to the scriptures, that he was buried and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures? If I really believe that and if there is no moral reason which would prevent it, my normal response should be to gather [00:10:03] with the Lord's people on the first day of the week and remember him in the

breaking of bread. And when we do so, the way that we think, what we say, the way that we act will be governed very much by the way we have spent the previous week. And in particular, how we spend the Saturday evening. There could be no better way of spending the evening on the seventh day of any week, preparatory to the morning of the first day of the week, than in meditating on the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ in its many aspects. Now, we hope to consider one of these aspects this evening.

We cannot dwell too long on the inspired heading, [00:11:03] but we can come to this, can't we, the hind of the morning, that which can be seen in all its splendor when the night is passing and the morning about to break, or that which we consider on the positive side, the blessing that arises for those who have trusted Christ as Saviour, has only accrued because the dark night of the suffering of Christ has been endured.

My God, my God, why, why hast thou forsaken me?

Worth noting that in that perfect life on earth of the Lord Jesus, [00:12:01] in the communion that he ever enjoyed, the way in which he addressed his prayers in the perfection of his manhood, in the closeness of that communion, was ever when stated to his Father as such, Father, Holy Father, Righteous Father, my Father, O Father, when we come to the cross, when he was carrying out that which he had been bidden to do for the first time, as an indication of his position before his God in holy manhood, [00:13:02] he cries, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

Now, I would just like to go down these verses, not a verse at a time, but a section at a time, to consider this, even a cursory reading of these opening verses, can it escape the fact, and we sang the hymn, which is a meditation upon it, the fact that he was absolutely alone, alone in his life, in the perfection of his humility and dependence, alone, unique, in the quality of his communion with his God, while here upon earth, unique in that display of practical righteousness on every occasion, [00:14:04] and as we read the Old Testament books, and as we consider that one of the blessings promised to man who was faithful to God and dependent upon God, was that in time of need, crying out to God brought consolation, respite, relief, salvation.

The psalmist, in his deep extremity, peeling into insignificance compared with that which it ultimately foretold, Christ upon the cross, but the psalmist envisages a situation, looking back at the history of the fathers of the nation, [00:15:02] disobedient, failing, weak, unreliable, and yet, when they turned in a measure of contrition, a measure of dependence, and cried upon their God, they were heard.

What must it have been like to the Lord Jesus, knowing that, that the history of that nation, littered with examples of unfaithfulness, and yet when they turned to their God, knowing that they would be heard, the Lord Jesus, in his omniscience, knowing that when his ultimate cry for deliverance would come, that there would be this about it, that the only one who deserved to be heard, [00:16:02] for his faithfulness, would have to cry, why hast thou forsaken me?

The fathers had been heard in their day, and now the one who exceeded and excelled their faithfulness and their obedience in every respect, was the only one who would not be heard, when he cried.

The question arises, why? Well, we'll come to that. The next section tells us that knowing that he wasn't being heard, even though he deserved, as far as he himself was concerned, he deserved to

be heard, that he remained submissive.

In our own little way.

We know, don't we, that if, where you work, [00:17:03] where you study, where you live, the more righteous you are, the worse treatment you get, and the harder it is to submit to that before God and to accept that this is the way that God would have it. If in any little way we've known that in our own experience, how much in the ultimate, the Lord Jesus, crying upon his God, in whom he had trusted all his days upon earth, surrounded by the mockers, turning to the only one in whom relief might be found, to be found alone, forsaken, [00:18:01] abandoned, alone, submissive, surrounded by mockers, and even worse, surrounded by enemies. If we look at verse 12, we'll see the graphic way in which these enemies begin to be spoken of.

There are the bulls.

There is the lion. There are the dogs.

There is the assembly of the wicked. There is the lion's mouth.

This figurative way of summing up all those that were against him, surrounding him at the cross, may be taken, may be understood, in a variety of ways.

I suggest one.

I'll be delighted to hear your suggestion. [00:19:04] The first one, many bulls have come past me, strong bulls of Bashan have beset me around. Bulls, powerful, majestic.

About a year ago, I was staying with a farmer who breeds bulls.

He was called to inspect one of the bulls. There was some defect, apparently, something that the farmhand wasn't very happy about, and the farmer was called to see it. And he invited me to accompany him, but when we got close, he said, I think it would be wise if you stay outside the stockade, and I readily agreed with that. [00:20:02] He said, but watch what happens. He says, note, he said, when I get inside, he said, there's that powerful beast in front of me, and he says, the only way to approach it is to engage it by the eye, to look it full in the eye. And he says, you'll notice that it will return its baleful glare or gaze at me eye for eye, and he said, I will approach it steadily, without rushing, without any sudden movement. When I touch it, my touch will be gentle but firm, and he said, I will speak to it, and I will continue to touch it, I will continue to look at it in the eye, and he said, when I finished my inspection, he said, I will retreat backwards, and he said, I will keep looking at it, and he said, I will get over the fence [00:21:01] continuing to look at it, being careful not to engage in any sudden movement.

And he did.

Some time after that, I was reading this verse, and I thought, if you're faced with one bull, you can do all that, you can look it straight in the eye, but if you're compassed about with bulls, if you're absolutely surrounded by them, you can only look at one at a time. What must it have been like for the Lord Jesus? Absolutely surrounded by enemies. Not one at a time, but all at the same time.

The rulers of the Jews, the Gentile civil authorities, [00:22:04] the military brigades, the common people, the traitors, those who are merely interested in a spectacle.

I think perhaps, summing them all up, that these powerful bulls of Bashan might give us some little idea of the Lord Jesus, who in this situation speaks of himself as so lowly, so humiliated, I am a worm and no one.

He speaks of dogs.

We read very often of the dogs of the Gentiles.

He speaks of the assembly of the wicked. Perhaps one way of describing [00:23:04] the rulers of the Jews, the high priests, the scribes, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, which term we select for which company is secondary. The primary thing is to consider that there, at the moment when he was bereft of comfort, bereft of support, alone, forsaken, there was time to reflect that all these round about, surrounding him, waiting to devour him if they possibly could.

Very often in the scriptures, Satan is referred to as the lion waiting to devour all those who oppose him.

One of the couplets [00:24:02] always opposed Christ and Satan and here at that very moment, when in dependence upon God, seeking to do his will, was the climax of Satan's opposition to him. Well, may well be that there is just a slight colour in these terms and these beasts that are used of the enemies that surrounded him as strong bulls of Bashan. If there is any doubt as to the event which is referred to, verses 14 to 17, is a most graphic description of death by crucifixion.

It is worthy of note, of course, [00:25:04] that prophetically this was looking on to a time when there was an empire in charge of events which didn't come into existence and prominence until about 600 years after the psalm was written and only under the Roman regime was death by crucifixion the way of execution. And even then, and this is more telling to us, even then, upon those criminals, from the lowest social order, and even then for the most despicable of crimes, the detail is horrific.

[00:26:02] But even more than the physical detail is the consideration that comes into verse 15.

My strength is dried up like a potsherd, my tongue cleaveth to my jaws, and thou, thou hast brought me into the dust of death.

Now this brings us to one of the most necessary but one of the most difficult considerations when we meditate upon the cross of Calvary. Circumstantially, we have a record here of what men did to Christ at Calvary.

The taking of him, the abusing of him physically, the decision that this is what they would do to him, the manner in which it was carried out. [00:27:02] Circumstantially, it is a record of what men did to him. And yet, in that unique solitariness, the Lord Jesus attributes what is going on to the hand of God. It's what men did to him, but thou, say they, have brought me into the dust of death, thou hast brought me unto the dust of death.

Now, it's here that we come to a very necessary meditation.

Broadly speaking, we can distinguish when we are thinking of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ [00:28:01] between what men did to him and what God did to him.

And we need to keep clear in our minds this major distinction.

What men did to him, he endured for righteousness sake.

And God's answer to that will be the application of justice and ultimately the condemnation of the wicked on the basis of the death of Christ.

When we consider what God did to him, we are caused to dwell upon the fact [00:29:03] that when Jesus died at Calvary, he was suffering at the hands of God on account of sin.

And as a result of that, the result of that will be the flow of the mercy of God and blessing for men.

It's worth saying that again before we move on. That which Christ endured at the hands of men will be met by the justice of God and those who perpetrated it will be brought into condemnation. That which God did to Christ on account of sin results in the flow of the mercy of God and will result in blessing for men. Now this answers the first question why. [00:30:05] Verse 1. Why hast thou forsaken me?

It was on account of sin.

Verse 3 gives a partial answer. Thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.

God desires to dwell amongst the praises of his people. He desires a response from them to him.

Before they can respond to him and be at home in his presence, they need to have their sins dealt with once and for all.

Every claim of God as to sin must be fully answered.

Propitiation is necessary. And as a result of propitiation [00:31:01] being made by Christ in dying for sin, the mercy of God can freely flow and blessing result for man. Isn't this why?

While when we first trust the Saviour we rejoice in the forgiveness of sins, as the days go by, we find increasing need to meditate on what was involved really substantially when Christ died upon the cross. And we come to this. We need to distinguish between what men did to him and what God did to him. Now, the paradox is this. The thing that is perhaps difficult to understand is this.

It was at that very time when man did his worst at the cross of Calvary, [00:32:03] it was that very time when God took the occasion to deal with him on account of sin. There was nothing in that spotless, pure, perfect life of Christ upon earth in the days of his flesh that could answer to God as to sin.

His death was necessary.

The death of Calvary.

Not the death circumstantially, wicked hands taking him and crucifying and slaying him, but God taking the occasion then that his soul might be made an offering for sin.

Now, as we read the psalm, we've got our answer to the first question why. God cannot look upon sin. [00:33:02] God cannot tolerate sin. He is absolutely holy because of this. If praise is to flow to him, if there are to be those who are the redeemed of the Lord, it must needs be that there's this once and for all sacrifice for sin which Christ gave at Calvary.

But having posed the question, we need to meditate now as to which kind of suffering pre-eminently the psalm takes us. Is it suffering at the hands of men or is it suffering at the hands of God? Now, I made a point of reading as far as the opening of verse 21 and not the rest of the psalm.

But if we look at that, we'll see that in verse 22 there is a company brought to light who are termed the assembly, [00:34:03] the congregation, at least a prefiguring of the assembly, the church of the living God, nearest and dearest to the heart of Christ. Verses 23 to 26, an account of the blessing that shall be enjoyed and the response that shall be given in and through and from the nation of Israel in the world to come. Verses 27 towards the end when we see the blessing in which some of the nations of the Gentiles shall be brought as a result of their attitude and activities towards the nation of Israel in their moment of deepest distress. But taking the three groups without even going into the detail, we can see [00:35:01] that the result of the sufferings of the Christ in this way results in blessing, results in companies being brought to light which shall enjoy the presence of God and the privilege of responding to God in praise and therefore in confirmation of the suggestion that here we have a picture of what it meant to the Lord Jesus to suffer at the hands of God. Thou hast brought me into the dust of death.

Now the first question why comes in verse 1. Why hast thou forsaken or abandoned me? The scripture has given us the answer because at that moment he was suffering on account of sin. But when we come to verse 21 perhaps we can read it in the way the more literal [00:36:01] translations guide us.

Save me from the lion's mouth. Thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns. The cry for deliverance comes to a climax.

And when it comes to a climax unlike the beginning of the psalm there is now an answer. Thou hast heard me. Why? If the first cry could not be answered why is the second cry answered?

The first cry could not be answered immediately because God was taking the occasion to deal with our Lord Jesus Christ on account of sin. But for the same reason the second cry, the climactic cry save me from the lion's mouth [00:37:01] is heard because the work had been done.

Having been brought into death to deal with sin to deal with Satan to take our place to bring glory to God to answer every claim of God upon sin the answer is now possible because the depths have been plumbed. The death has been endured. Sin has been suffered for.

And so the death of Christ is followed by the resurrection of Christ. Latter day theologians attack the death and all on the significance of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. It's not without note that they also attack the personal resurrection [00:38:01] of our Lord Jesus Christ. Without it we couldn't repeat such sublime truths as he was delivered for our offenses he was raised again for our justification. Or

from his point of view God raised him from the dead and gave him glory.

The personal resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is vital to Christianity. And it is because the depths have been plumbed and his soul had been made an offering for sin that the work had been completed fully and to perfection that the answering cry can now come thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorn.

I like the way the psalm ends.

[00:39:01] It shall come while a seed shall serve him it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. They shall come and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born that he hath done this.

It's another climax.

Whatever the company of the blessed whichever company of those that have part in the first resurrection those of the nation of Israel brought into blessing those of the saved among the nations their cry is in absolute unison it's his work he did it it's his alone what other focal point can there be [00:40:04] for the praise of any of the Lord's people than to be able to say he did it alone he bear the cross alone its grief sustained alone he shall bear the glory because alone he did the work if the Lord spares us till the morrow I trust that at least some of the things that we have been meditating upon tonight will condition our hearts and our minds and our response as we meet together to remember him. Let us sing together Psalm number 378 Lord Jesus, our Redeemer what pains, what sufferings saw [00:41:03] were borne by thee in patience to save us evermore thy hands, thy feet, both wounded thy soul in offering made thy precious blood outpouring wherewith our peace was made for us thou wast forsaken for us made sin by God we think upon thine anguish thy pain beneath the rod we thank thee for thy sorrows thy suffering and thy woe though little, O Lord Jesus our hearts those depths can know.