

## Following God into the Dark

A young King David wrote this Psalm, it is full of strife, difficulty, questions and dark times. We figure out quickly that (to different degrees) we will all walk in a time of faith darkness..."my God, my God why have you forsaken me".

For most of us (comparatively speaking) our difficult times are not even close to what Jesus experienced as well as others who went before us.

As we read this Psalm we will notice a writing style called "poetic parallelism". The writer will masterfully go back and forth: verse 1 "*Why are you so far from saving me*" then in verse 3 "*Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One*". This unique pattern will occur time after time, this pattern is important to understanding the message of the Psalm.

### Text

#### Psalm 22:1-31

*For the director of music. To the tune of "The Doe of the Morning." A psalm of David.*

- <sup>1</sup> My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?  
Why are you so far from saving me,  
so far from my cries of anguish?*
- <sup>2</sup> My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer,  
by night, but I find no rest.*
- <sup>3</sup> Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One;  
you are the one Israel praises.*
- <sup>4</sup> In you our ancestors put their trust;  
they trusted and you delivered them.*
- <sup>5</sup> To you they cried out and were saved;  
in you they trusted and were not put to shame.*
- <sup>6</sup> But I am a worm and not a man,  
scorned by everyone, despised by the people.*
- <sup>7</sup> All who see me mock me;  
they hurl insults, shaking their heads.*
- <sup>8</sup> "He trusts in the LORD," they say,  
"let the LORD rescue him.  
Let him deliver him,  
since he delights in him."*

*let the LORD rescue him.  
Let him deliver him,  
since he delights in him.”*

*<sup>9</sup> Yet you brought me out of the womb;  
you made me trust in you, even at my mother’s breast.*

*<sup>10</sup> From birth I was cast on you;  
from my mother’s womb you have been my God.*

*<sup>11</sup> Do not be far from me,  
for trouble is near  
and there is no one to help.*

*<sup>12</sup> Many bulls surround me;  
strong bulls of Bashan encircle me.*

*<sup>13</sup> Roaring lions that tear their prey  
open their mouths wide against me.*

*<sup>14</sup> I am poured out like water,  
and all my bones are out of joint.  
My heart has turned to wax;  
it has melted within me.*

*<sup>15</sup> My mouth is dried up like a potsherd,  
and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth;  
you lay me in the dust of death.*

*<sup>16</sup> Dogs surround me,  
a pack of villains encircles me;  
they pierce my hands and my feet.*

*<sup>17</sup> All my bones are on display;  
people stare and gloat over me.*

*<sup>18</sup> They divide my clothes among them  
and cast lots for my garment.*

*<sup>19</sup> But you, LORD, do not be far from me.  
You are my strength; come quickly to help me.*

*<sup>20</sup> Deliver me from the sword,  
my precious life from the power of the dogs.*

*<sup>21</sup> Rescue me from the mouth of the lions;  
save me from the horns of the wild oxen.*

*<sup>22</sup> I will declare your name to my people;  
in the assembly I will praise you.*

*<sup>23</sup> You who fear the LORD, praise him!  
All you descendants of Jacob, honor him!  
Revere him, all you descendants of Israel!*

*<sup>24</sup> For he has not despised or scorned  
the suffering of the afflicted one;  
he has not hidden his face from him  
but has listened to his cry for help.*

*<sup>25</sup> From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly;  
before those who fear you<sup>[f]</sup> I will fulfill my vows.*

*<sup>26</sup> The poor will eat and be satisfied;  
those who seek the LORD will praise him—  
may your hearts live forever!*

*<sup>27</sup> All the ends of the earth  
will remember and turn to the LORD,  
and all the families of the nations  
will bow down before him,*

*and all the families of the nations  
will bow down before him,  
28 for dominion belongs to the LORD  
and he rules over the nations.  
29 All the rich of the earth will feast and worship;  
all who go down to the dust will kneel before him—  
those who cannot keep themselves alive.  
30 Posterity will serve him;  
future generations will be told about the Lord.  
31 They will proclaim his righteousness,  
declaring to a people yet unborn:  
He has done it!*

## **Honest Assessment, Honest Praise**

One thing that jumps out at us as we read this Psalm is how raw, real and honest the writer is being. The writer is asking; where are you God, why aren't you saving or answering me? Even his assessment of himself and his situation is brutally honest: *"I am a worm and not a man, scorned by everyone, despised by the people"*. This emphatically tells us that God does not become upset with honest dialogue with him.

He is also very honest in his praise and acknowledgement of God. Verse 3, *"Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One"*. He even acknowledges; *"Yet you brought me out of the womb"*.

We begin to understand that this Psalm has a rhythm that matches the Christian life. C.S. Lewis in his book on the Psalms commented specifically about this style of writing and called it "a little incarnation". He saw this style or rhythm as a small picture of what it was like to walk with Jesus.

To take this thought even further, Psalm 23 follows Psalm 22. We all are familiar with the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, as we talk about how he is our Shepherd and how he leads us beside the still waters. But don't separate Psalm 23 from Psalm 22, because we learn about our walk with Jesus.

### **"Yet"**

Our lives will be marked by seasons of darkness, and then God breaks in. A.J. challenged us to notice the operative word in the Psalm: "yet". We see it in verse 3 and verse 9 in the midst of this raw honesty about the situation..."yet". This is "anticipated praise", even before things have improved or gotten better.

American Author Mary Flannery O'Connor was a writer who wrote with this type of honesty. She suffered from lupus saying she was "trapped in this body of death" eventually dying at 39 years of age. She wrote with an understanding that He meets us in our darkness but doesn't always remove us from it. A lot of times it doesn't always feel like the love of God, yet...

remove us from it. A lot of times it doesn't always feel like the love of God, yet...

## Why?

An honest question in light of all we have read is; why would God allow such difficulty in our lives? The honest answer is that God doesn't give an answer to the Psalmist or to us.

But we also understand that something happens during these traumatic times. This is especially true about people who walk through these times together. People can actually dislike each other, but after walking through a difficult time, (experts call it "trauma bond"), something interesting happens. This trauma bond also applies to our relationship with Jesus as we walk through these times together.

The Psalmist (and we) may not understand the whys, but he trusted God in the midst of the dark time of faith. We see this in the life of Jesus during his darkest hour, but we also see that his last words were; "into your hands I commend my spirit". This statement does not come from scripture (like many things he said) but every Jewish child would pray before they would go to sleep. Jesus by saying this was trusting God to wake him up in the morning or in this case would not leave him in the grave.

## One Big Problem

As bible experts look at the 22<sup>nd</sup> Psalm they identify one big problem, David never experienced anything in his life like was written in this Psalm. As we read the Psalm we realize that he is describing an execution.

Jesus knew that Psalm 22 wasn't about King David but was about him, it graphically looked forward to his execution.

C. S. Lewis wrote an insightful book called "Grief Observed" about the death of his wife. During their courtship his wife "Joy" was diagnosed with cancer, she would die a short time after they were married.

All of us begin to ask, God where are you, but there usually aren't any answers to these questions...*because he wants to give us himself!* If we had all the answers we wouldn't need him! He is dying to be with us.

## Discussion Questions

- 1) What were your first thoughts and impressions after reading Psalm 22? Also what did you think of the style of writing David used called "poetic parallelism"?
- 2) Have you ever been through a dark season and felt what the writer of this Psalm was feeling? Maybe feelings like, "where are you Lord", "why aren't you saving me", "are you hearing me", "do you love me"? (Remember that God is okay with honest, raw interaction)

love me”? (Remember that God is okay with honest, raw interaction)

- 3) Please share your thoughts about C.S. Lewis observations that this Psalm has a rhythm that matches the Christian life. He called it “a little incarnation”; similar to a small picture of what it is like to walk with Jesus. Also discuss his observations that we can’t have a Psalm 23 without a Psalm 22.
- 4) Discuss the significance of the word “yet” found in verses 6 and 9.
- 5) It is inevitable that the “why” questions will surface during seasons like these. Look again at the notes above, what are some things that happen during times like this? How does the phrase “into your hands I commend my spirit” come into play in our study?
- 6) What is the “one big problem” that A.J. addressed in his sermon?
- 7) We may begin to ask God the “why” questions but there usually isn’t any answers to these questions. A.J. suggested that the reason is *because he wants to give us himself* and if we had all the answers we wouldn’t need him! What do these statements mean to you?