

The Suffering Saviour

Radio Sermons



by
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Introduction

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent. But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded. But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people." Psalm 22:1-6.

The Suffering Saviour is a recurring theme in the Old Testament. One of the clearest pictures of the agony, rejection and suffering of the Lamb of God is given in Psalm 22. This is the Lord Jesus Christ's own prophetic description of His crucifixion, written about one thousand years before it actually occurred.

The four Gospels describe the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus from man's perspective, for each contains eyewitness accounts of that awful scene on Calvary. The Gospels also tell us that the Blessed Saviour fulfilled all four types of the sacrifices of the Levitical law. He was the Sin Offering, the Trespass Offering, the Peace Offering and the Burnt Offering.

The Worst Suffering of All

The Gospel accounts show that the Lord Jesus Christ went through untold suffering at the hands of man when He was crucified. But the Gospels only hint at the much worse suffering that our Lord underwent at the hand of God the Father, as He turned His face away from His only begotten Son during those last three awful hours of darkness. It was during that period, and not during the early hours of suffering, that Christ was made the substitute for lost sinners. It was then that He actually suffered in our place that separation from God, which is the second death.

The human author of Psalm 22, the man who actually put the words on a scroll, was Israel's King David. Scripture itself bears

testimony to this fact, for the superscription of the psalm is "A Psalm of David." And the superscription is just as much a part of the sacred Hebrew text as the psalm itself. Yet this has not kept liberal Bible critics from calling this fact into question. They claim that the psalm was written much later than the time of David.

The reason for the attack upon the authorship of Psalm 22 is clear. This psalm undeniably pictures someone undergoing death by crucifixion. And execution by crucifixion was unknown at the time of David. The Hebrew form of execution was by stoning. Crucifixion was used by the Romans, and the Roman Empire did not appear on the world scene until about twenty-five years before our Lord's birth.

Not the Suffering of David

Everything in Psalm 22, when compared to the other Davidic Psalms, bears witness to the fact that David was the human author. It is most likely that David wrote this psalm during the severe persecutions he had suffered while being pursued by King Saul. But the sufferings described in this psalm are not, and could never be, the sufferings of David himself. In all of his life, David never underwent anything like the agony and the deep inward spiritual suffering pictured in this psalm.

Neither does the prophetic picture of the resulting glory of the last part of the psalm refer to David. There is only one explanation for the existence of this psalm. The Holy Spirit of God came upon David and testified, one thousand years beforehand, of the sufferings and the glory of Christ.

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1.

“The Dawning of Redemption”

“Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.” 1 Peter 1:10-11.

The Apostle Peter said that David, along with other Old Testament prophets, looked diligently forward to the time and the manner of Christ's coming. Psalm 22, which reveals the innermost thoughts of our Lord Jesus Christ as He hung on the cross for our sins, must have been one of the Scriptures that Peter had in mind. King David was a prophet, for he most definitely did testify “beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.”

In fulfilling the “type” of the Old Testament sin offering, the Lord Jesus Christ was made sin for us “that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” II Cor. 5:21. However, the New Testament does not tell us a great deal about the deep spiritual agony that our Lord Jesus Christ endured while He himself was undergoing that awful judgment of God against sin. But it does guide us to places where we can find descriptions of that agony.

As those three hours of supernatural darkness that hung over the earth were coming to an end, Scripture tells us that the Lord Jesus Christ cried out from the deep agony of His tortured soul, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34. That cry directs us back to Psalm 22 and tells us that this psalm is most definitely Messianic.

An Inspired Superscription

There is one noteworthy item that is often overlooked in the study of Psalm 22. That is the superscription above the opening

verse of the psalm, which reads, "To the chief Musician upon Aijeleth Shahar, A Psalm of David." Notice the two untranslated Hebrew words, "Aijeleth Shahar." These provide a significant description of our Lord Jesus Christ and His work. Literally translated, these words are "the roe (or hart) of the dawn of the morning." This should immediately bring to our minds the designation given to the Shepherd-Lover of the Song of Solomon. "Behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. My beloved is like a roe or a young hart." Song of Solomon 2:8-9.

There is also a deeper, hidden meaning to the superscription. Some Bible expositors have applied this phrase to the suffering of God's Holy One, and also to His resurrection. The picture that they see there is that of the wounded hart as He suffers innocently in the night, but then the dawn of the morning brings relief.

The Visible "Glory Cloud"

However, the true meaning seems to go even deeper. It is in the older traditions of the Jewish rabbis that we find a key to a proper interpretation. The ancient Jewish authorities explain that "Aijeleth Shahar" refers to the glory cloud. It refers to the Shekinah, which in Old Testament times was visibly present in the midst of Israel. The "dawn of the morning" was poetically compared to the horns of a hart (that is, a stag, a male deer) by the Israelites. We can understand this comparison because the sharp rays of light from the rising sun have the appearance of horns. So the Israelites speak of the words "Aijeleth Shahar" as meaning "the dawning of redemption."

According to Jewish tradition, the morning sacrifice (which was always a lamb) was offered just as soon as the first rays of the morning sun appeared on the eastern horizon. A watcher was always stationed on the pinnacle of the temple. It was his job to provide an announcement immediately upon his detection of the first rays of the rising sun. The watcher would call out, "Behold, the first rays of the morning shine forth!" And the priests below then would offer the lamb in sacrifice. The words

“Aijeleth Shahar” refer to this practice. So we know from the superscription that this psalm deals with the blessed dawning of redemption through Him who is the true Lamb of God.

“To the chief Musician upon *the dawning of redemption*, A Psalm of David.”

2. The Orphaned Cry and the Finished Work

“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?” Psalm 22:1.

Psalm 22 opens with what some Bible teachers have called “Immanuel’s orphaned cry.” *“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”*

In the Hebrew text, this psalm ends with a cry of triumph: “It is finished!” These closing words are not found in any of our standard English translations. The King James Version closes with the words “They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done (this).” In the New American Standard Version, Psalm 22 closes thus: “They will come and will declare his righteousness to a people who will be born, that he has performed (it).”

The final word in both the King James Version (“this”) and the American Standard Version (“it”) is in italics. The translators use italics to indicate that there is nothing in the text at this point to correspond to the word they have supplied, but they feel the addition is necessary to give the proper sense to the English.

In Hebrew there is no neuter form; so to convey an indefinite

idea, sometimes the masculine is used and sometimes the feminine is used. So actually the form of the word for "he hath done" could — and I believe should — be translated, "They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, *that it is finished.*"

So Psalm 22 begins with a cry that designates our Lord as the great sin offering of the Levitical law. And it ends with the cry that tells that His work *is finished!*

Psalm 22 divides naturally into two parts. The first twenty-one verses stand together, for they contain the prophecy of our Lord's passion. In this part of the psalm the Holy Spirit of God describes the suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ as He was alone in His great agony. There was no one standing by Him. There was no one associated with Him. His enemies encircled Him and heaped reproach on Him. But He was completely alone when He bore our sins before God.

In the last part of the psalm, verses 22 through 31, the Holy Sufferer has companions - brethren who are associated with Him. And by this we know that we have entered into His resurrection life. The work of the cross is past. "They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, *that it is finished.*"

3. "Father, Forgive Them"

"And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? and we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Luke 23:39-43.

The words of the first part of Psalm 22 describe the Suffering Saviour hanging there on the cruel Roman cross. But before He entered into the experiences that this psalm records, He had already been on that cross for almost three hours. The Lord Jesus Christ was nailed to the cross about nine o'clock in the morning and His dead body was taken down sometime after three o'clock in the afternoon. From nine A.M. until noon He suffered. But during that time He suffered at the hands of man.

For the first three hours that Christ hung on the cross, the sun shone brightly. During that time man bared his wicked, natural heart against the blessed Son of God, mocking Him and abusing Him. But during that awful period, not one word came from our Lord's lips that would even suggest that He had any concern for Himself. He prayed to the Father. And when He spoke from the cross, He had others in view. He looked down from the cross and saw His mother, Mary, and also John the apostle, standing there. And He said to John, "Behold thy mother." And He said to Mary, "Behold thy son!" And John, understanding what He was asked to do, led her away from the scene of the Saviour's dying agony.

Then the Lord looked at the cruel multitude gathered about Him, those whose mouths were filled with blasphemy, and those whose minds had only hatred for Him. He then looked toward heaven and cried, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." And by so saying, the Lord Jesus opened the door of a "city of refuge" for the very ones who actively participated in His crucifixion. He permitted those people to enter in as ones who have slain a man without knowing what they were doing. They therefore could seek mercy and forgiveness. But there is a touch of irony in this, for He Himself was the only available "city of refuge"!

Then the Lord turned to the thief hanging by His side. The one repentant thief had recognized in that thorn-crowned man Israel's true Messiah, and he had confessed himself as a sinner deserving of death. The man had cried, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom."

The Suffering Saviour's reply was, in effect, "You won't have to wait until I come into My Kingdom. Today you shall be with me in paradise." And he most definitely was! That Jewish day ended at sunset. But before the sun had set, the Saviour had died and the thief had died, and the two were together in paradise!

Christ had no concern for Himself during the initial three-hour time period. He was undergoing physical agony, but the face of the Father was turned toward Him. It was during the latter three-hour time period, when He was made sin for us, and the Father turned His face away, that our Lord suffered the agonies of hell. It was then that He settled the sin question for all eternity.

4. **Forsaken of the Father**

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not, and in the night season, and am not silent. But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel." Psalm 22:1-3.

At high noon on that fateful Wednesday, a great change came. The sun was blotted out and darkness spread like a thick blanket over the scene of our Saviour's suffering.

That physical darkness was a picture — a symbol — of the much deeper spiritual darkness that had wrapped around the very soul of the Son of God. It was at that point that God began to deal with His Son about our sins. Always remember, it was not the physical suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ that put away sin. Rather, it was what He endured in His innermost being at the hand of God. Isaiah spoke about that time "when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin." Isaiah 53:10.

Intense Suffering at the Hands of God

What the Lord Jesus Christ suffered at the hands of men could

never atone for sin. But what He suffered at the hands of God during those three hours of darkness *did* settle the sin question — forever! All the wrath that our sins deserve fell on the Holy One of God — the Suffering Saviour. While He was enduring such deep spiritual suffering, He was absolutely silent. “*And as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.*” Isaiah 53:7.

The Lord Jesus was silent up until the time that the three hours of darkness were about to come to an end, and at that time it almost seemed as though His very heart would burst with the intense agony. It was then that He uttered that cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

Forsaken So We Might Not Be Forsaken

The Suffering One asked a question, and a question needs an answer. Do we know the answer to that question? I am the answer to it — and so are you! Why was He forsaken of God? He was forsaken so that you and I might not be forsaken! It was because He was made sin for us! It was because He voluntarily underwent the punishment that our sins deserve. He, the infinite One, underwent spiritual separation from God for a finite time so that we, finite ones, will not have to undergo spiritual separation from God for an infinite time. “*But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes (bruise) we are healed.*” Isaiah 53:5.

It is in the opening verse of Psalm 22 that we hear “Immanuel’s orphaned cry,” that cry which came from the lips of our Suffering Saviour near the end of those three hours of darkness, those hours when the Son of God was made sin for us, when God was forced to turn His face away! Think of it! *He who is God was forsaken of God!* This is beyond our powers of comprehension, but the Word of God assures us that it happened. He was forsaken of God so that we might not be forsaken of God.

Listen to our Lord’s cry, and understand that the words of this psalm come from the very depths of His heart. He was looking up

to God the Father during that awful period of physical and spiritual darkness. And He cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

That cry expresses the consummation of all the sufferings of our Lord. These words bring us face to face with the incomprehensible depths of His work as the Sin-bearer. The sins of the whole world were laid upon Him. And this man, who, during all His previous earthly ministry, could always say "I am not alone" was, during these hours, left alone! The spotless, sinless, unblemished Lamb of God bore the wrath of a holy, righteous God! God bruised Him, and put Him to grief. He was forsaken of God. The physical darkness over the earth was the visible evidence of the spiritual transaction that was taking place.

The God of heaven could make no answer to the Lord Jesus' cry. God sent no angel to strengthen Him. The full penalty of sin, a penalty that we could not even begin to comprehend, had to be paid. All the wrath of our righteous God descended upon Him. Imagine Christ's agony as He was forsaken of God.

Again, hear our Lord's cry as He said, "*Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.*"

The Lord Answers His Question

There was no answer from heaven to the question, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" However, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Suffering Saviour Himself, supplied the answer to it. And in that answer He totally justified God. There still was not a word of complaint as He spoke. He had prayed, "Not my will, but thine be done." Luke 22:42. He accepted it all as from God, and He answered His own question. "But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel."

It was because God is holy that the Sin-bearer had to be forsaken of God. The Holy God can allow no sin in His presence. And while God's Son was the Sin-bearer, while He actually had

the sins of the world on Him, God had to turn His face away. It was absolutely necessary in order for the great transaction to be accomplished. So here, right on the threshold of Psalm 22, we find the great atoning work of our Lord Jesus Christ brought forth in its deepest Godward aspect. And it is because of this great transaction that God is able to extend His grace to guilty, lost, spiritually dead sinners — to us!

What follows this solemn opening is the story of the cross. It is the story of the cross in all its suffering and shame. It is highly significant that "Immanuel's orphaned cry" stands first in the psalm. Had man written this story of the cross, he would have first gone into an elaborate description of the physical sufferings of our Lord and would have related first what man did to Him. Man would have described first the awful details of the crucifixion.

The Holy Spirit Is The True Author

Although King David was the human author of Psalm 22, he actually did not compose it. The Holy Spirit of God is the true Composer. And the Holy Spirit puts the deeds of man, which were responsible for the physical sufferings of our Lord, into the background. And He brings the orphaned cry of the Forsaken One into the foreground. Why? Because it is what the Lord Jesus Christ suffered at the hands of God that put away sin! It was not the abuse that man heaped on Him. It was not the suffering that man inflicted upon Him. Our Lord Jesus Christ had to die the second death (which is separation from God) in order that we might not have to die the second death. Again, the Infinite One suffered a finite time so that we who are finite might not be eternally separated from God. We can accept the benefits of His death and have them applied to ourselves.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16.

5. “A Worm and No Man”

“But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in thee; they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded. But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.” Psalm 22:3-6.

Listen to the Suffering Saviour as He continues to address God. He looked back over the history of Israel, God’s chosen people, and said, *“Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and were delivered: They trusted in thee, and were not confounded. But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men and despised of the people.”*

There He is, the Lord Jesus Christ, the infinitely Holy One of God standing in contrast to every so-called good man in all past ages. God had never forsaken a righteous man. But here, the spotless Lamb of God hung on the cross, the absolutely righteous One, dying — and forsaken of God!

A Brilliant Scarlet Dye

The Hebrew word our Lord used for “worm” is “tola.” “Tola” is the name of a small insect, the coccus, from which scarlet dye is made through the death of the animal. These little worms were gathered up, placed in a basin and crushed. Thus was obtained the brilliant crimson that made the permanent scarlet dye that was used in the Orient. It was tremendously expensive, and in Bible times it was worn only by the rich and nobility.

This is not the only place that this dye is referred to in Scripture. The term is used over and over again. It is the color which was needed for use in the tabernacle of Moses. This term was used when Solomon is said to have clothed the maidens of Israel in scarlet. The term is also used in the book of Daniel, where Daniel was to have been clothed in scarlet by Belshazzar. And in every

one of these cases, the word for scarlet is literally "The splendor of a worm." "They shall be clothed in the splendor of a worm."

The Lord Jesus Christ said, "I am a worm — I am the tola." He had to be crushed in death in order that you and I might be clothed in glory! The glorious garments of our salvation are the garments that have been procured as a result of His death and His suffering. Just think what a terrible thing it is to refuse the garment of salvation — to spurn it, to turn away from it. For consider what our Lord Jesus Christ had to go through in order to prepare salvation for us.

The All-Important Garment of Salvation

Do you remember in Matthew 22 the unmitigated gall of the man who went into the marriage feast without a wedding garment? In this parable, told by our Lord, the king had prepared a garment for the man. But he spurned the king's gracious gift. When the king exclaimed, "Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?" we are told, "And he was speechless." Matt. 22:12. He had no reply. The marriage garment had been extended to him as a gift, and he had refused it. He had made a good case for himself earlier when he was confronted by the king's servants. But when he faced the king himself, he was speechless.

If you are unsaved, my friend, let me direct this question to you. What will you say when you stand before God and He says, "Friend, what are you doing here without the garment of salvation that was purchased for you by the death of My Son?" What can you say when you stand there without it, and it was offered to you freely? It's a gift of God's grace. And there will be no excuses then. Scripture says, "*He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*" John 3:18.

6. A Scene of Shame

“But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him. But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother’s breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother’s belly. Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help. Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.” Psalm 22:6-13.

Death is a tragic and solemn thing. To see the life of a fellow human being fading away is hardly an occasion for joy or rejoicing — unless, that is, the dying one is an enemy. Can anything be more tragic on a human level than to be deserted by one’s fellow beings at the time of greatest need? And yet this is exactly what happened at Calvary. Men reproached the Lord Jesus Christ. His own brethren after the flesh, the Jews, despised and rejected Him. “They laugh me to scorn. They shoot out the lip. They shake the head.”

Then we find that the very language used by the priests and the elders as they surrounded the cross is foretold in Psalm 22 by the Spirit of God. *“He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.”*

How true that statement is! During His earthly life and ministry our Lord Jesus Christ did trust in God. He was the servant of God. He went about doing the will of the father who sent Him. And He trusted in the Father still, as He hung there on that Roman cross.

“But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother’s breasts. I was cast

upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly."

His Relationship to God the Father

Do you see what is involved in that great Scripture? Even as the little Babe — that "holy thing" that was born (Luke 1:35) — came into the world, He had full consciousness of His relationship to God the Father. Even from His mother's belly — from the womb — He trusted in God. What a tremendous insight this gives us of that "holy thing," who is, according to the prophecy of Isaiah, "Wonderful!" Isaiah 9:6. and notice, it is only of the Lord Jesus Christ that this could be said. It is not true for any other child ever born into the world. The human author of the psalm — King David — is no exception.

There on the cross, there was no answer. Christ hung upon a tree. He was accursed. He was made sin for us. He was forsaken of God. And He cried, *"Be not far from me; for trouble is near, for there is none to help."*

Then our Lord saw the leaders in Israel gathered against Him, and He said, *"Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and roaring lion."*

The "bulls of Bashan" were clean animals; they could be offered in sacrifice. Here in Psalm 22 they are used to signify the religious leaders in Israel. They were the ones who held the oracles of God. They should have been His friends. But there, compassed about the cross, they also were arrayed against Him. From the cross Christ saw only enemies.

Fulfillment of Prophecy

Our Lord looked down upon the "dogs" and the "assembly of the wicked." Verse 16. The word "dogs" is used as a designation for the unclean Gentiles. The expression "assembly of the wicked" is a designation for the Jews, those who were God's covenant people after the flesh. This brings to mind the scene foretold in that great prophecy of Psalm 2. *"Why do the heathen*

rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed (Christ).” Psalm 2:1-2.

The book of Acts tells of the fulfillment of the prophecy of Psalm 2. *“The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.”* Acts 4:26-28.

7.

The Awful Death by Crucifixion

“I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me; they pierced my hands and my feet.” Psalm 22:14-16.

In these verses the awful crucifixion is described. Truman Davis, a medical doctor, has made a detailed study of the medical aspect of crucifixion. He has published his findings in several periodicals. We will draw on his report as we consider the next few verses of Psalm 22.

Death by crucifixion involves excessive perspiration and, therefore, rapid dehydration. There is a rapid loss of vital body fluids. And what does verse 14 tell us? *“I am poured out like water.”*

The weight of a human body hanging only upon the arms suspended by nails in the hands, as it struggles to pull itself

upward to prevent suffocation, literally results in disjointed arms, limbs, shoulders, etc. The joints are actually pulled out of their sockets. And we find the Suffering Saviour crying, *"All my bones are out of joint."*

As the loss of vital tissue fluids reaches a critical level, the compressed heart must struggle to pump heavy, thick, sluggish blood into the tissues. The muscles of the heart are overstrained, and it begins to fail. *"My heart is like wax, and it is melted in the midst of my bowels."*

"My strength is dried up." As the end is near, the victim experiences extreme weakness. The tortured lungs make a frantic effort to gasp in small gulps of air. The dehydrated tissues send their flood of stimuli to the brain. The nervous system is almost overtaxed.

The victim also experiences excruciating thirst. *"My tongue cleaveth to my jaws. Thou hast brought me into the dust of death."*

And as our Lord hung there on the cross, He looked at the spiteful Gentiles circled round about Him. They had joined with the Jews, His own people after the flesh, in this great act of man's extreme cruelty and wickedness. And He said, *"For dogs have compassed me."* His own people, the Jews, were there also. *"The assembly of the wicked have inclosed me."*

"They pierced my hands and my feet." In Roman crucifixion, the victim was placed against the wood of the cross while it was lying flat on the ground. The usual place to drive the nail was through the depression at the front of the wrist. The heavy, square but sharp-pointed nail was driven through the wrist, or hand, and deep into the wood. When both hands had been secured, the cross was lifted up from the ground and the base was dropped down into the hole with the victim suspended only by the hands. The left foot was then pressed backward against the right foot, and with both feet extended, toes down, a single nail was passed through the arches of both feet. The victim was then crucified. *"They pierced my hands and my feet."*

What a perfect, detailed description this psalm gives us of our Lord's death! And He hung on Calvary's cross, not for Himself, but for you and me.

8. The Death of the Saviour

"I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture. But be not thou far from me, O LORD. O my strength, haste thee to help me. Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog. Save me from the lion's mouth." Psalm 22:17-21.

The Lord Jesus Christ, who was pure, who was perfectly holy, whose mind had never had an evil or unclean thought, hung there before that assembled crowd, naked, put to shame before them all. And He said, *"I am able to count all my bones: they look and stare upon me."* This Holy One, before whom even the angels veiled their faces, became a gazingstock to the lowest and vilest of humanity. And He endured it all - for us!

This psalm, penned by King David one thousand years before our Lord's birth also predicted the parting of the garments and the casting of lots. *"They part my garments among them, and they cast lots upon my vesture."*

At the foot of the cross the Roman soldiers, calloused, hard, indifferent men parted Christ's garments. They gambled for His clothes as He hung naked on the cross. He was put to shame so that He might bridge the gap from earth to heaven for poor, lost sinners. He did it for you and for me!

While we are told of what men and Satan did to our Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit of God clearly shows that neither man nor Satan could touch His life. No creature could put the Son of God to death! Our Lord addressed God, not man, when He said, *"Thou hast laid me into the dust of death."* Verse 15.

An Act of Obedience

The death which our Lord Jesus Christ suffered was according to the will of God. Therefore, it was an act of obedience.

The blessed Lamb of God endured the cruelty of the cross, and He despised the shame to which men put Him. How can men, in the face of such overwhelming evidence of divine inspiration as we have in this psalm, reject the written Word of God and also deny the Lord who bought them? The answer is simply the depravity of the natural heart. *"There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable: there is none that doeth good, no, not one."* Rom. 3:11,12.

But then our blessed Suffering Saviour looked to the Father as Satan came against Him in all his fury. "But be not thou far from me, O Lord: O my strength, haste thee to help me. Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling (or 'my only one')." It is His own soul, His seat of conscious life, that He was speaking of here. He was asking the Father to separate the soul and body, to carry Him through physical death. *"Deliver my soul from the sword; my only one from the power of the dog."*

The "Lion of Satan"

The Gentile dog was raining affliction upon Christ but physical death would separate Him from that power. *"Save me from the lion's mouth."* It is the "lion of hell," Satan himself, that our Lord was referring to here. Satan was waiting and saying, "Now, in a moment I will have His soul; I will have Him where I want Him, and He will never come out of death again."

Then, in the next moment all suffering was over. The darkness lifted from the land, and Christ said, "Father, into thy hands I commend (commit) my spirit." Luke 23:46. And, through the pen of Matthew, we are told, *"Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and*

came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.” Matt. 27:50-53.

And we can say, along with the centurion who was an eyewitness to these things, “Truly this was the Son of God.” Matt. 27:54.

9. The Horns of the Unicorns

“For thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns. I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.” Psalm 22:21-22.

Speaking to God the Father, our Lord Jesus Christ, said, “*For thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.*” This verse has been a source of confusion to some, for we know that there is no such thing as a “unicorn.” The unicorn is a mythical beast, and the origin of this myth is in the Babylonian pagan religious system.

This word “unicorn” is in the King James Version of the Bible only because the English translators confused the meaning of the original Hebrew word. It is now known that this Hebrew word refers to the aurochs - a wild ox with great branching horns that were almost as sharp as needles at the ends. It is said that pagan executioners used to take condemned victims and tie them by the feet and shoulders on the sharp horns of a live aurochs. Then they would turn that wild ox loose in the wilderness to run and thrash about until the victim died. That may be the picture that our Lord has in view here. Crucifixion did have certain similarities to the putting of a victim upon the horns of a wild ox.

This explanation does not bring out the total meaning of our Lord’s words, however. When our Lord Jesus Christ hung on that Roman cross, He was the true Lamb of God that was being

offered in sacrifice on the altar of the burnt offering. The great brazen altar that stood before the opening of the Holy Place of the tabernacle and of the later temple was there as an implement for offering the burnt offerings. The instructions for the construction of this altar are found in Exodus 27:1-2, where we read, *"And thou shalt make an altar of shittim wood, five cubits long, and five cubits broad; the altar shall be four square: and the height thereof shall be three cubits. And thou shalt make the horns of it upon the four corners thereof: his horns shall be of the same: and thou shalt overlay it with brass."*

Four Horns of the Altar

The altar of the burnt offering was constructed with four horns, one at each of the four corners. The books of the law do not tell us the exact purpose of these horns, and if we were left with only the writings of Moses, we might be in the dark on this point. But in Psalm 118:27 we read these words, *"God is the LORD, which has showed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar."* So we can know that the four horns were used as tie points for binding the sacrifice in place while it was being offered.

The Roman cross was the antitype of that brazen altar. It was on that cross that the true Lamb of God was offered up to God as the One perfect sacrifice to settle the sin question. Our Lord Jesus Christ was not bound with cords to the "horns" of this Roman "altar." Rather, He was bound with great iron nails. But, nevertheless, the great crossbar of that Roman cross was the antitype of the "horns" of the brazen altar. So the brazen altar that stood before the Holy Place of the tabernacle was in view when our Lord Jesus Christ said, *"For thou has heard me from the horns of the aurochs."*

All His Prayers Were Answered

God had heard Him. All of His prayers were answered from the horns of that Roman "wild ox" - the cross. God did answer this One who died at Calvary. God's answer came when our Lord Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. "The mighty power, the exceeding greatness of His power" was applied, and our Saviour came forth from the tomb alive evermore!

"Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." Isa. 53:10-12.

10. The Glory to Follow

"I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee. Ye that fear the LORD, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel. For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard. My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him." Psalm 22:22-25.

The first twenty-one verses of Psalm 22 tell the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ as He hung on the cross of Calvary. Beginning with verse 22 and extending on through the remainder of the psalm we have the results of our Lord's passion.

The suffering is over. The supernatural darkness is past. And the Suffering Saviour, who was alone in the first part of the psalm is now no longer alone. He endured the agony of the cross alone, but in the glory that follows He has company. The question is, "Who are the companions now with Him?" They are all those who know the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour. They are the ones who owe everything for eternity to the work that He did on the cross.

Verse 22 says, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee." In the epistle to the Hebrews this verse is quoted and translated as follows: "In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee." Hebrews 2:12. And this brings clearly before us the identity of Christ's companions as mentioned in the second half of Psalm 22.

The Chief Musician

Here is our blessed Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, brought up from the clutches of death itself. And now, He takes His place in the midst of the company of the the redeemed, the church. And He leads this great company in their chorus of praise to God. He Himself now is "the Chief Musician." Do you recall words of the inspired superscription at the head of this psalm? "To the Chief Musician upon the dawning of redemption, A Psalm of David." Do you see the deep spiritual significance of this inspired superscription? The Lord Jesus Christ is going to lead the singing of the redeemed throughout all eternity!

Then the Holy Spirit, still speaking through the pen of King David, turns to God's chosen people, Israel. "*Ye that fear the LORD, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him; all ye the seed of Israel. For he (the Father) hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted one (the Son).*" Verse 23.

Notice the significance of this statement. While God the Judge had to turn His face away from the Sin-bearer during those dark hours, God the Father never forsook His only begotten Son! The Lord Jesus Christ was never closer to the heart of the Father than during that period of time when God the Judge could not interfere with the judgment.

The Father Was the Judge

Several Bible expositors have used an illustration that is most appropriate to what our psalm brings out here. There was the case of a young man, one very much loved by his father, who had committed a serious crime; and as a result he was brought to court. The person sitting on the judge's bench was this young

man's own father. The evidence was presented, the defense was made and the young man was proven guilty. It became the solemn task of the judge to pronounce sentence upon the guilty. The sentence was pronounced, and the young man said, "Father, surely you're not going to do this to me!"

But the father said, "Young man, in this courtroom I'm not dealing with you as your father. I'm dealing with you as your judge!" But in spite of this, the father's heart was broken. He still loved his son very much.

God the Judge had to deal with His Son about our sins. But while He was doing this, God the Father was suffering over the agony that His Son was enduring. Just think how God the Father rejoiced when His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, came forth from the tomb!

And so God the Father says, *"My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him. The meek shall eat and be satisfied."*

Let me direct this question to the reader of these words. Are you one of the meek who eats and is satisfied? You can be if you believe the testimony of God's Son. *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."* Acts 16:31.

11. The Good Shepherd

"My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him. The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the LORD that seek him: your heart shall live for ever. All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the LORD'S: and he is the governor among the nations. All they that be fat upon the

earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him: and none can keep alive his own soul. 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 it is finished." Psalm 22:25-31.

As a result of the work of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, a way has been opened for God to spread His great Gospel banquet. Do you recall the opening lines of our Lord's parable of the wedding feast found in Matthew 22? *"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding."* Verse 2. Those who will make themselves lowly enough to believe the testimony of God's Son and come as confessed sinners may eat and be satisfied.

"And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." John 6:35.

So, speaking of the results of the work of the cross, God the Father says, *"My praise shall be of thee (Jesus) in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him. The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the LORD that seek him: your heart shall live forever."*

Just look at the wide extent of the benefits of our Lord's work on the cross. *"All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee."*

All the latter part of Psalm 22 has not been fulfilled as yet, but it will be when our Lord comes the second time in power and glory. *"For the kingdom is the Lord's: and he is the governor among the nations. All they that be fat upon the earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him: none can keep alive his own soul."*

We are plainly told that all creation, every creature, is going to

bow down before that blessed God-man who did not keep alive His own soul, but in love chose to go into death — for us! We either bow before Him in repentance during this lifetime, and in that way receive Him as our personal Saviour, thus applying the benefits of His death to ourselves. Or we will bow in judgment at the Great White Throne. The choice is ours.

But in the meantime, while waiting for His return and the full day of the King, “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 *it is finished.*”

To you who read these words, I declare that today the work of the cross is finished. It is your choice as to whether the benefits of His work apply to you. It is a free gift. You can accept it by bowing before Him and saying, “Lord Jesus, I am a sinner, lost and undone. But I ask you to save me. I put my entire trust in you.”

He is not on the cross anymore. He is the Good Shepherd now. This is declared in Psalm 23 which follows. God has raised Him from the dead, and He has taken Him to highest glory. He is there as the Saviour, and He is there as the Good Shepherd, guiding His people through this world, providing for them.

He is “the way, the truth, and the life.” John 14:6.

The End