

PSALM 22 vs 1

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A psalm of David about the great Savior...

Most people now days are unfamiliar with Charles Spurgeon's great volume: The Treasury of David – an insightful exposition of the Psalms. Excerpts from his commentary are used here.

Spurgeon writes: This is beyond all others: **THE PSALM OF THE CROSS**... most likely repeated word by word by our Lord when hanging on the tree. It is a photograph of our Lord's saddest hours, the record of His dying words of His last tears... of His expiring joys. In prophetic voice, King David wrote...



¹ My God, my God, why had You forsaken me? / He would want to know why he is left, he raises that question and repeats it, but neither the power nor the faithfulness of God does he mistrust. We must lay emphasis on every word of this saddest of all utterances.

Why? / What is the great cause of such a strange fact as for God to leave his own Son at such a time and in such a plight? There was no cause in him, why then was he deserted?

Had / It is done... and the Savior is feeling its dread effect as he asks the question. It was no threatening of forsaking which made the Savior cry aloud.

You / I can understand why traitorous Judas and impulsive Peter should be gone, but You, my God, my faithful Friend, how can you leave me?

Forsaken / If You had chastened, I might bear it, for Your face would still shine; but to forsake me utterly, ah! Why is this?

Me / innocent, obedient, Your suffering Son; why did You leave me to perish?

why are You so far from helping me,

and from the words of my roaring? / The Man of Sorrows had prayed until his speech failed him, and he could only utter moanings and groanings... like the roarings of a wounded animal. What strong crying and tears were those which made him too hoarse for speech! What must have been his anguish to find his own beloved and trusted Father standing afar off, and neither granting help nor apparently hearing prayer.

² O my God, I cry in the day time,

but You do not hear; and in the night season, and am not silent. / His soul was not stilled. For our prayers to appear to be unheard is no new trial, Jesus felt it before us. He still held fast... and cried still, **My God**. Our Lord continued to pray even though no comfortable answer came, and in this he set us an example of obedience to his own words, "men ought always to pray and not to faint." No daylight is too glaring, and no midnight too dark to pray.

³ But You are holy,

You who inhabits the praises of Israel. / To help us understand this verse we could say, Some dwell in Zion; Lot dwelt in the gate of Sodom; **the Holy God... dwells in the praises of His people.**

Spurgeon writes: We are very apt to think and speak harshly of God when we are under his afflicting -- troubling hand; but not so the obedient Son. He knows too well his Father's goodness to let outward circumstances libel his character. The God of Jacob... deserves no censures; let Him do what He will, He is to be praised, and to reign enthroned amid the songs of His people. If prayer be unanswered it is not because God is unfaithful, but for some other good and weighty reason.

If we cannot perceive any ground for the delay, we must leave the riddle unsolved, but we must not fly in God's face in order to invent an answer.

⁴ Our fathers trusted in You: they trusted, and You deliver them. / Out of all their straits, difficulties, and miseries... faith brought them by calling their God to the rescue; but in the case of our Lord it appeared as if faith would bring no assistance from heaven, he alone of all trusting ones was to remain without deliverance. When we feel ourselves sinking, it is poor comfort to know that others are swimming. But the Savior, three times over mentioned, they trusted, and trusted, and trusted, and never left off trusting.

⁵ They cried to You, and were delivered:

they trusted in You, and were not confounded. / As if He had said... How is it that I am now left without help, in my overwhelming griefs, while all others have been helped? This is true wrestling; let us learn the art.

⁶ But I am a worm / in Hebrew: tolaath; a **red worm** used for making **scarlet** cloth,

and no man; / Spurgeon writes: How could the Lord of glory be brought to such abasement as to be not only lower than the angels, but even lower than mankind. What a contrast between I AM... and "I am a worm". He felt himself to be comparable to a helpless, powerless worm, passive while crushed, and unnoticed and despised by those who trod upon him. Man by nature is but a worm; but our Lord puts himself even beneath man, on account of the scorn which was heaped upon him... and the weakness which he felt.

a reproach of men, and despised by the people. / How utterly did the Savior empty himself of all glory, and become of no reputation for our sakes! [He became] their common butt and jest; a byword and a proverb unto them: the sport of the rabble, and the scorn of the rulers. Even the voice of the people was against him. The very people who, a week earlier, would have crowned him, now despised him.

⁷ All who see me laugh at me: / Mockery has for its distinctive description: cruel mockings; those endured by our Lord were of the most cruel kind. All sorts of men were unanimous in the derisive laughter, and vied with each other in insulting him. Priest and people, Jewish leaders and Gentiles, soldiers and civilians, all united in the general scoff, and that at the time when he was prostrate in weakness and ready to die. Which will we wonder at most: The cruelty of man; or the love of the bleeding Savior?

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How can we ever complain of ridicule after this?

they shoot out the lip, they shake their head, / These are the gestures of contempt. Panting, grinning, shaking of the head, thrusting out of the tongue, wagging the finger, and other modes of derision were endured by our patient Lord. Men made faces at him, before whom angels veil their faces and adore. They punned upon his prayers; they made matter for laughter of his sufferings; and set him utterly at naught -- they consider him the ultimate nobody!

saying,

⁸ He trusted the LORD that He would deliver him: let Him deliver him, seeing He delighted in him. / [Let us remember him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself.](#) On reading these verses one is ready to ask, Is this a prophecy or a history? For the description is so accurate.

We must not lose sight of the truth which was unwittingly uttered by the religious leaders. They themselves are witnesses that Jesus of Nazareth trusted in God: why then was he permitted to perish?

Note, that their ironical jest, **seeing He delighted in him** was true. The Lord did delight in his dear Son.

⁹ But You are He who took me from the womb:

You made me hope when I was on my mother's breasts. / That Child... [at whose birth suddenly appeared a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest] now fighting the great battle of his life, uses the mercy of his nativity as an argument with God.

Faith finds weapons everywhere. Was our Lord so early a believer? Was he one of those babes and sucklings out of whose mouths strength is ordained? So it would seem; and if so, what a plea for help!

¹⁰ I was cast upon You from the womb:

You are my God from my mother's belly. / The psalm begins with: **My God, my God**, and here, not only is the claim repeated, but its early date is urged. What perseverance of faith, to continue pleading with holy ingenuity of argument! His birth was his weakest and most perilous period of existence; if he was then secured by Omnipotent tenderness... surely he has no cause to suspect that divine goodness will fail him now.

¹¹ Be not far from me; / This is the petition for which he has been using such varied and powerful pleas. His great woe was that God had forsaken him, his great prayer is that He would be near him.

for trouble is near;

for there is none to help. / The nearness of trouble is a weighty motive for God's help; this moves our heavenly Father's heart, and brings down his helping hand. The absence of other helpers is another telling plea.

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In our Lord's case none either could or would help him, it was needful that he should tread the winepress alone. There is an awfulness about absolute friendlessness which is crushing to the human mind, for man was not made to be alone, and is like a dismembered limb when he has to endure loneliness.

12 Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. / The priests, elders, scribes, Pharisees, rulers, and captains bellowed round the cross like wild cattle... full of strength and fury; they stamped and foamed around the innocent one, and longed to gore him to death with their cruelties. Imagine... the Lord Jesus as a helpless, unarmed, naked man, cast into the midst of a herd of infuriated wild bulls. He says... **Be not far from me.**

13 They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. / They could not vomit forth their anger fast enough through the ordinary aperture of their mouths; and therefore, set the doors of their lips wide open like those who gape. Like roaring lions they howled out their fury, and longed to tear the Savior in pieces, as wild beast raven over their prey.

Turning from his enemies, our Lord describes his own personal condition. . . .

14 I am poured out like water, / He is utterly spent, like water poured on the ground. He poured out his strength and spirit, so that he was reduced to the most feeble and exhausted state.

and all my bones are out of joint:

my heart is like wax;

it is melted in the midst of my bowels. / The Greek liturgy uses the expression: "thine unknown sufferings". If the heart of Christ, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, melted at it, what heart can endure, or hands be strong, when God deals with them in his wrath?

15 My strength is dried up like a piece of clay; and my tongue cleaves to my jaws;

and You brought me into the dust of death. / Jesus likens himself to a broken piece of earthenware, or an earthen pot baked in the fire till the last particle of moisture is driven out of the clay. Thirst and fever fastened his tongue to his jaws. Dryness and a horrible clamminess tormented his mouth, so that he could scarcely speak. So tormented in every single part... as to feel dissolved into separate atoms, and each atom full of misery; the full price of our redemption was paid, and no part of the Surety's body or soul escaped its share of agony. The words may set forth Jesus as having wrestled with Death until he rolled into the dust... with his antagonist. The Lord of glory stoops to the dust of death.

We are to understand every item of this sad description as being urged by the Lord Jesus as a plea for God's help.

16 For barking dogs surround me: the assembly of wrongdoers encircled me: / Here he marks the more ignoble crowd, who, while less strong than their brutal leaders, were not less ferocious, for there they were howling and barking like unclean and hungry dogs. Such a picture is before us.

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In the center stands, not a panting beast, but a bleeding, fainting man; and around him are the enraged and unpitying wretches who have hounded him to his doom.

This is not the only occasion when professed churches of God have become synagogues of Satan.

they pierced my hands and my feet. / Roman crucifixion was not even known at the time David wrote this psalm. Spurgeon writes: This can by no means refer to David, or to any one but Jesus of Nazareth, the once crucified but now exalted Son of God.

17 I can count all my bones:

they look and stare at me. / So emaciated was Jesus by his fasting and sufferings. He could count and re-count his bones. The zeal of his Father's house had eaten him up; and like a good soldier he had endure hardness. Unholy eyes gazed insultingly upon the Savior's nakedness. The sight of the agonizing body ought to have ensured sympathy from the throng.

18 They parted my garments among them, and cast lots for my clothes. / The garments of the executed were the privileges -- the bonuses... of the executioners in most cases. While Jesus was dying naked; they gambled for his tunic.

19 But be not far from me, O LORD:

O my Strength, hurry to help me. / He repeats the petition so pitifully offered before. He wants nothing but his God, even in his lowest state. He does not ask for the most comfortable or nearest presence of God, he will be content if He is not far from him. Hard cases need timely aid, and we may be urgent with God as to time... and cry, Please hurry! Mark how in the last degree of personal weakness he still calls the Lord "my Strength".

20 Deliver my soul from the sword,

my Darling / my only one... Most commentaries associate this endearing term with the speaker... thus meaning: the only Son of God. But that doesn't make much sense. The One speaking throughout this psalm seems to be saying, **My Darling**. Now days, we might say, Deliver me, **Love of my life!** And the Lord God was the love of this One's life, right?

from the power of the barking dog. / In other words: deliver my living soul from my present foe, the cursed and cursing cur of this present attack.

21 Save me from the lion's mouth: for You heard me from the horns of the unicorns. / Having experienced deliverance in the past from great enemies, the Redeemer utters his last cry for rescue... from what is as fierce and mighty as the lion.

The transition is very marked; from a horrible tempest... all is changed into calm.

22 I will declare Your Name to my brothers and sisters:

in the midst of the congregation I will praise You. / Among his first words after the resurrection were these, Go to my brothers and sisters. The Name... the character and conduct of God by Jesus Christ's gospel are proclaimed to all the holy friendship -- My God and your God; My Father and your Father.

Not merely in a little household gathering does our Lord resolve to proclaim his Father's love; but also, in the great assembly... the congregation of the first-born. In the great universal church JESUS is the One authoritative teacher, and all others, so far as they are worthy to be called teachers, are nothing but echoes of his voice. Jesus, in this second sentence, reveals his object in declaring the divine name. It is that God may be praised.

23 You who fear the LORD, praise Him; / The reader must imagine the Savior as addressing the great congregation. He exhorts the faithful to unite with him in thanksgiving. **You who fear the LORD...** fear is the beginning of wisdom, and is an essential sign of grace.

all the seed of Jacob,

glorify Him;

and fear Him,

all the seed of Israel. / all those ruled by God; Let all who fear Him, from the literal descendants and claimants of their father Jacob, meaning: the Heal-catcher – so, the less spiritual... to those who claim they are of their father Jacob who grew up and was named **Israel**, meaning ruled by God – so, the more spiritual... or even of the spiritual Israel the Paul wrote about... which ever camp you are in: **fear Him!**

Spurgeon wrote: All spiritual Israel does this, and we look for the day will come when Israel after the flesh... will be brought to the same mind.

24 For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; / Never was man so afflicted as our Savior... in body and soul ...from friends and foes, by heaven and hell, in life and death... and not because the Father despised and abhorred him. Jehovah always loved him, and in love laid that load upon him with a view to his ultimate glory and to the accomplishment of the dearest wish of his heart.

neither has He hid his face from him;

but when he cried to Him, He heard. / That is to say, the hiding was but temporary, and was soon removed; it was not final and eternal.

25 My praise will be of You in the great congregation: / The word in the original is: from thee -- true praise is of celestial origin. The clerk says, Let us sing to the praise and glory of God; but the choir often sings to the praise and glory of themselves. Jesus loves the praise of the great congregation.

I will pay my vows before them that fear him. / Spurgeon asks: Did the Lord when he ascended to the skies proclaim amid the redeemed in glory the goodness of Jehovah? Jesus, the Messiah vowed to build up a spiritual temple for the Lord, and he will surely keep his word.

²⁶ The meek will eat and be satisfied: / Mark how the dying Lover of our souls comforts himself with the result of his death. The once spiritually poor find a feast in Jesus. The thought of the joy of his people gave comfort to our expiring Lord. They who eat at Jesus' table receive the fulfillment of the promise, "Whoever eats of this bread will live forever."

they will praise the LORD who seek Him:

your heart will live forever.

²⁷ All the ends of the world will remember and turn to the LORD:

and all the kindreds of the nations will worship before You. / Evidently it is his grand consolation that the Lord will be known throughout all places of his kingdom. From the inner circle of the church, the blessing is to spread in growing power until the remotest parts of the earth will turn for reconciliation. It is well to mark the order of conversion as here set forth: 1. They will "remember" -- this is reflection, like the prodigal who came unto himself; 2. 'and turn unto the Lord -- this is *metanoia*: thinking differently, like Manasseh who left his idols... and 3. "worship" -- this is holy service, as Paul adored the Christ whom once he abhorred.

²⁸ For the kingdom is the LORD's:

and He is the governor among the nations. / As an obedient Son, the dying Redeemer rejoiced to know that his Father's interests would prosper through his pains. Amid the tumults and disasters of the present, the Lord reigneth -- let thy glorious kingdom come.

²⁹ All they that be fat / this is not the morbidly obese; but the marvelously prosperous...those greatly blessed by the Lord

All they who are prosperous... upon earth will eat and worship: / Spurgeon writes: the rich and great are not shut out, though grace now finds the most of its jewels from among the poor... and least.

all those who go down to the dust will bow before him: / There is relief and comfort in bowing before God... when our case is at its worst; even amid the dust of death prayer kindles the lamp of hope.

Even the Savior bowed to his Father as he said, Not my will; but Thine be done. We know, one day every knee will bow before him, whether or not they want to.

and none can keep alive his own soul. / This is the stern counterpart of the gospel message of "look and live". There is salvation in no other name. That truth should be proclaimed in every corner of the earth, that like a great hammer it may break in pieces all self-confidence.

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³⁰ **A seed will serve Him; it will be accounted to the Lord for a generation.** / In Isaiah 53 the prophet asks two questions: Who has believed our report? And, who will declare his generation?

Isaiah 53: 10 answers: when You will make His soul an offering for sin, he will see his seed... he will see the travail of his soul and be satisfied. Who has believed our report? Who will declare his generation? I will; how about you?

³¹ **They will come,** / Nothing will thwart God's purpose. In this, the dying Savior finds a sacred satisfaction.

They will come, and will declare his righteousness...

unto a people that will be born, / None of the people who will be brought to God by the irresistible attraction of... the word of his endurance... will remain mute.

They will tell forth the righteousness of the Lord, so that future generations will know the truth. They will keep his word; they will not deny his name. Fathers and Mothers will teach their sons and daughters, who will hand it down to their children; the burden of the story always being...

that He has done this

...really, it is one Hebrew word: asah; meaning, **it's done**; or **he did it**; or even... accomplished; achieved. In other words, exactly what Jesus said on the cross, the day He went out and died for all of us...

It is finished!

Every Praise

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