

Why Jesus Endured the Cross, Part 1

Psalm 22:22-31

What David wrote of in Psalm 22 is poetry, metaphor, figures of speech; depicted a very real situation, accurate to be sure, but still written in poetic style. But the sufferings that were portrayed in that psalm, Jesus experienced those sufferings in stunningly accurate detail. Just as an example of that, look at what's written in verses 14-18 of Psalm 22. It's psalmist says, "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death. For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and my feet—I can count all my bones. They stare and gloat over me; divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots."

It's exactly what we read in the Gospel accounts regarding Jesus Christ. When you compare that with what actually happened to Jesus Christ on the cross, a thousand years after this was

written, it's absolutely amazing. Jesus didn't manufacture all those details. He didn't pay off people to fulfill all the different points of prophecy. We have the free choices of sinful men, here, of many sinful men, religious secular authorities. It had conspiracies of individuals and groups. You had individuals acting alone. You had informed scholars, all the way down to the ignorant rabble of the mob. They all came together, converged at the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. It's amazing, isn't it?

At the same time, it's amazing to realize that although Jesus did not manufacture the greatest trial of suffering that anyone has ever known, he wasn't a victim of it either. He gave himself up to the suffering of the cross. We realize that he did that to save sinners, sinners like you, like me. That was the plan of his Father to die as a substitute for our sins, to stand in the place of condemned sinners. Isaiah 53, again, "Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; he was stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. He was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all."

The weight of sins of all his people throughout all of time, throughout all of history, the burden of the guilt of

their offenses against Holy God, yes, but his beloved Father, Jesus Christ carried all of that to the cross. The Father gave him over to that. He poured out his full wrath for all those sins. He poured it all on his beloved Son. God had indeed provided for himself a lamb for the sacrifice. And he bled that lamb dry to pay for the sins of his people.

So we understand why Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" That entire psalm was on his mind as he went to the cross. He endured the cross. As he triumphed through the cross, that psalm was on his mind. He trusted God's Word even through this intense suffering. In fact, Jesus knew through his reading of other scriptures and his belief in the God who wrote the scriptures that God would ultimately deliver him from the cross, that he would go through the cross, and he would live, that he would endure.

According to Psalm 16:8-10, Jesus did believe that God would raise him from the dead. That psalm expresses Jesus' faith in clear detail. It says, "I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure. For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption." Jesus believed that. He trusted

God's Word, and he told his disciples on several occasions, he said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after that, after three days, rise again."

His disciples didn't understand what he meant when he said it at the time. Not until after his resurrection did they understand, but Jesus understood from start to finish, all the way through. And he entrusted himself to his God, and he was rewarded for his faith. Jesus died on Friday afternoon, buried right away, as we read, by Joseph of Arimathea. He remained in that grave through Saturday and according to his confident expectation, his confident hope, God raised him from the dead on Sunday morning, the third day. God did not abandon his soul to Sheol. God did not let his holy one see corruption. God rewarded his faith with resurrection life.

If Jesus endured the greatest trial ever known to mankind, and he did it by faith, by trusting God. You know what? We can endure our trials, too, which are trivial by comparison, right? We can endure our trials, also, by faith. His faith, his trust in God's Word, it's an example to us. His faith is instructive to us. It encourages us. We saw that through our brief exposition of Psalm 22:1-21. That was last time.

But there is something else we need to see in Psalm 22, which is at the heart of what took Jesus through the cross. It's this which propelled him toward the victory that he reached for. Jesus didn't endure the cross simply by gritting his teeth and through a cold, stoic faith in God, just bit the bullet of intense pain and unparalleled suffering. He wasn't a stoic. Jesus was instead quite the opposite. He was fueled in his faith by passionate desire. The writer to the Hebrews tell us to "look to Jesus, who is the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for," what? "the joy that was set before him." Right? "For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame and is now in victory seated at the right hand of the throne of God."

So Jesus looked through the suffering. He looked on the other side. He looked beyond the suffering to the joys that followed the cross. And that, beloved, is what we want to study as we finish Psalm 22: to learn not just how Jesus endured the cross by faith, but why Jesus endured the cross. Yes, he trusted his father implicitly, but trusted him for what? Jesus trusted that what his Father held forth for him on the other side of the cross, it was worth it. It was worth it. That's a question we need to ask ourselves, as well, right? Do we believe that the pleasures of God are worth it? Are they worth waiting for? In a

country like ours that's affluent in comparison with the rest of the world, has abundant prosperity that has access to any kind of pleasure, entertainment at the click of the mouse, at the drop of a dime, whatever it is, we can have it. We eat the food of kings all through a drive-thru, right? Well, depending on the drive-thru, I guess. But we eat very well.

There's so much here on offer, so much we can have access to in the land of opportunity. Are we willing to deny all that, wait for what God has in store? Are the pleasures of God worth it? Is it worth denying ourselves the pleasures of this life right now, getting what we want, to obtain instead the joy that God has in store for us? Jesus believed the words of Psalm 16:10. He believed those words applied to him personally, and rightly so. "You will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption."

The Apostles twice made mention of that reference right there in connection with Jesus Christ. Yes, that applies to him. And the final verse of that psalm tells us what he was after, what he was striving to obtain. The psalmist says, "You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore." Where is Christ seated now? At the right hand of the throne of God,

right? "At your right hand are pleasures forevermore." What was he after? Pleasures forevermore.

Again, folks, do we believe that? Is the path of suffering and self-denial, to which all Christians are called, is that the pathway of life for all of us? We believe that the presence of God is fullness of joy. Well, Jesus did. And he calls us to join in him in also denying ourselves, taking up our crosses daily. That's just a metaphor for dying to ourselves, dying to the world. And to follow him through the suffering to the triumphant joys of eternal life. What joys? Well, follow along as I read the final verses of Psalm 22, starting in verse 21.

You may remember from last week we stopped in the middle of that verse. We split Psalm 22 verse 21 in half. That verse closes the prayer for deliverance that the psalmist prayed, but then the tone changes drastically. In fact, the verb tense changed right in the middle of the verse. There's a prayer at the beginning, "Save me from the mouth of the lion." And then the change of tone. It's no longer a prayer. He says, "You have rescued me from the horns of the wild oxen." So the psalmist here is pivoting, and dramatically. This is no longer a request. It's no longer a prayer. It's no longer a hope, "Save me." It's

become a statement of fact. "You have rescued me." It's a done deal.

Jesus had prayed, "O, Lord do not be far off. O you my help come quickly to my aid." Well, God did not answer that prayer immediately, as we said. He put him through the cross. But he did answer that prayer ultimately by raising him from the dead. Resurrection was the answer to Jesus' prayer. And resurrection was the vindication of God's character because God had, once again, proven himself trustworthy. He proved himself to be faithful, to be reliable, to be a worthy reception of prayers like that. So while it wasn't the answer that we expected, it is a far greater answer, one we could have never anticipated. It's an answer that glorified God, that God raised his son from the dead, took him through the cross, raised him from the dead. Let's keep reading, verse 22, "I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you: You who fear the Lord, praise him! All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him, and stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel! For he has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, and he has not hidden his face from him, but has heard, when he cried to him.

"From you comes my praise in the great congregation; my vows I will perform before those who fear him. The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek him shall praise the Lord! May your hearts live forever! All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you. For kingship belongs to the Lord, and he rules over the nations. All the prosperous of the earth eat and worship before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, even the one who could not keep himself alive. Posterity shall serve him; it shall be told for the Lord to the coming generation; they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn, that he has done it."

Now Jesus, he had this entire psalm on his mind while he suffered on the cross. And you say, look, just because he quoted the first verse of Psalm 22 doesn't mean he was thinking about the entire thing. Prove that point, Preacher. I appreciate the challenge. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to show you why I say that he was thinking about this entire psalm while he was on the cross. Do you know what the final word of Psalm 22 is? Take a look at it there in verse 31. "They shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn, that he has done it." That verb translated, he has done it, it's the verb *asah*, which means, to do, to make, to accomplish. And the verb

tense here is the perfective. It's the completed idea in the Hebrew. So we could translate this, He has done, or It is done, or simply, It is finished. Does that ring a bell? John 19:30 tells us, "When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, 'It is finished,' and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit." So from the prayer at the beginning of Psalm 22, verse 1, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" to the triumphant proclamation at the very end, "It is finished," Jesus had Psalm 22 in its entirety on his mind.

Now ever since his resurrection, Jesus has been about the business to bring the joys of Psalm 22 into their final fulfillment. Why did Jesus endure the suffering of the cross? Why such pain? Why such agony? Why the rejection of his father, whom he expected to receive deliverance from? Well, it's all for the joy that was set before him, right? What joys? Well, there are several. Jesus endured the cross first of all to rejoice in the salvation of God. To rejoice in the salvation of God.

I don't know how many of you have experienced deliverance from grave danger, from a mortal threat in which your very life was in jeopardy. There's a feeling, once you're rescued from mortal danger, a feeling of relief. There's a jubilation, there, that is hard to describe. You literally feel like you escaped

with your life in your hands, and you're humbled. It's what the psalmist says here in verse 21, "You've rescued me from the horns of the wild oxen." It's as if God has plucked him off of the very horns of that wild beast where he had been impaled, where he was waiting to die.

David knew what it was like to come to the brink of death. On several occasions, he'd come to the brink of death. He escaped from the very jaws of death. But Jesus, we know, experienced a far greater deliverance because he passed through the veil of death. He experienced a kind of deliverance that no one but him has ever known. The relief, the jubilation that Jesus has experienced, utterly without parallel because the nature of his suffering and his deliverance are utterly without parallel. It's a joy that Jesus looked forward to what? Sharing with his brothers.

Look at verse 22 again. "I will tell of your name." When he speaks of, the name of God, he's speaking of the character of God, all that God is, all that God represents. "I will tell of your name," of your character, "to my brothers. In the midst of the congregation I will praise you." You may remember, we read earlier in the Scripture reading of Matthew's account of the resurrection, that Jesus appeared first to the women after his

resurrection, and he commanded them, "Go tell," what, "my brothers." My brothers, that refers, there, most immediately to the disciples, but Jesus considers all the redeemed to be his brothers, his sisters, his siblings. That's us, folks. You want more proof?

Well, the writer to the Hebrews tells us in chapter 2, "We see Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone, for it was fitting that he for whom and by whom all things exist in bringing many sons to glory should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering, for he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them," what? "Brothers." Brothers, saying, "I will tell of your name to my brothers," Psalm 22 verse 22, "I will tell of your name of your brothers; in the midst of your congregation I will sing your praise."

The writer to the Hebrews recognizes the connection, there. Those who follow Jesus in faith, you know what? We are looking forward as well to the hope of resurrection, and get this, we will one day listen to Jesus tell the tale of his deliverance from death. In fact, we'll hear him as he sings the praises of God in the midst of the great assembly, the great congregation.

I don't know about you, but I am looking forward with eager anticipation to hear Jesus singing! I believe there cannot be any sweeter sound than his voice, to hear our Savior sing songs of salvation.

They say God had only one Son, and he made him a preacher, right? Well, he also made him a worship leader. He won't only be singing about his own salvation. He won't only be singing about how God the Father delivered him from the horns of the wild oxen, from the very bowels of the grave but, and this is really incredible, he's going to call on us to share our testimonies of salvation. Take a look at verses 23-24, "You who fear the Lord, praise him. All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him. Stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel, for he has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted. He has not hidden his face from him but is heard when he cried to him." That's Jesus commanding the praise of his people.

The reference to Jacob and Israel, they refer most immediately to Jesus' Jewish brethren, right, believing Jews who are physical descendants of Abraham, but you know what, this extends to all of us. Look down at verses 25-27. This joy belongs to all who believe, the Jew first, but also for the Greek. "From you," verse 25, "comes my praise in the great

congregation; my vows I will perform before those who fear him. The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek him shall praise the Lord! May your hearts live forever!"

And look at this, verse 27, "All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations," the *goyim*, the Gentiles, that's us, "all the families of the nations shall worship before you." How does he mark them out? Not just Israel, but us, too; those who fear him, the afflicted, those who seek him from the ends of the earth, "all the families of the nations." You know what this anticipates, the final fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant, in which God promised Abraham, Genesis 12:3, "in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." On in Genesis 15:5, God brought Abraham, you remember, brought him outside, said, "'Look toward heaven. Number the stars if you are able to number them.' Then he said to him, 'So shall your offspring be.'" Jew and Gentile alike, all drawn in. It says that "Abraham believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness."

Those are the family of faith. Abraham's faith. A faith that takes God at his Word, just believes what he says. Those are the brethren in whose presence Jesus will sing. They are the ones he will encourage to join him in rejoicing and praising God

for their salvation. And they are to praise, to glorify God, to stand in awe of him, why? Because we each have a story to tell of God's merciful salvation in our own lives, don't we? We can each testify to the fact that God has not despised or abhorred, at is says there, our afflictions. He has not hidden his face from any of us, but he has heard when any of us cry out to him. It takes humility to do that, doesn't it? The proud don't call out to God. The proud feel they can handle it on their own. The proud are self-assured. It's the humble, those who cry out to him, who know their need, they are the ones that God is quick to rescue.

Our sufferings do not compare to what Christ suffered. We have endured very little by comparison to all that he endured for our sakes, right? But in the end Jesus wants to hear from all of us. Is that not amazing? He rejoices to hear each individual testimony of God's salvation, because all those testimonies of salvation are woven together in a fabric, a beautiful tapestry of the glory of God. And that's what all of this is about. In the end, when the fulness of God's mercy is known, it will vindicate all the faithfulness of God. It will all serve to glorify his name. Things that we can't make sense of now, then it's all going to weave together perfectly. The universe is going to be an unending echo chamber for all



eternity of the glorious name of God, of his righteous character
proclaimed in songs of praise by Jesus Christ and the
congregation of his people.